

THE POETRY OF MANUEL GUTIÉRREZ NÁJERA

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PREFACE

Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera was born into a fairly well-to-do, middle-class Mexican family, in Mexico City, on December 22, 1859, the year Benito Juárez promulgated the Reform Laws. He died, also in Mexico City, on February 3, 1895, when the Díaz regime was at the height of its power and elegance. Thus his life was spent in the Mexico of nineteenth-century bourgeois liberalism, a culture which placed great emphasis on stability, material prosperity, an elegant and leisurely life style, classical education, and religious orthodoxy, and which took as its model nineteenth-century France with its carefully structured manners and rationalistic, unemotional approach to life.

The child born into this milieu was schooled in the classical manner, with emphasis on Latin, French and Spanish literature and rigorous orthodox Roman Catholicism. The predominant influences on his early life may be said to be his education and his mother, a deeply religious woman who communicated this faith to her son, as evidenced in his early poetry.

His comparatively short life was, superficially at least, very much a part of the predominant bourgeois affluence, organized around stable family life, prosperous business endeavors, and the social life of elegant clubs and cafes. He married, at the age of twenty-nine, Cecilia

Maillefert, of partial French descent; the marriage was, as far as is known, happy and stable and produced two daughters. In politics, Nájera was a supporter of the government of Porfirio Díaz, a regime which valued conformity with established values, order, and prosperity for the ruling classes above all else. Nájera never openly departed from religious or political orthodoxy.

Nájera's life was, however, organized fundamentally around his career as a journalist and publisher.

JOURNALISTIC CAREER

Nájera spent the greater part of his energies as a journalist, first as a writer and later as a publisher. He wrote stories, essays, and poetry for several leading newspapers of the Mexican capital. His journalistic output was great and there remains a large body of prose written under his pseudonym, "El Duque Job," a name which according to Nell Walker was taken from a French play Le Duc Job. Apparently he liked the Romantic sound of the name and appreciated its value as instant journalistic identity without having any conscious philosophical reason for adopting it.¹ Even so, there must have been at least a subconscious attraction to the duality of suffering and nobility contained in the name, for such an attitude very definitely characterized the greater part of his poetry.

By means of his newspaper writing, Najera took part actively in the life of his time and place, although he was in actual fact somewhat removed from it, spending the greater part of his time absorbed in his writing. Contemporary observers describe him writing almost constantly, retiring by himself immediately after a theater performance to a cafe to write a review for publication. It is estimated that his total output of journalistic pieces reaches one thousand five hundred.²

The culmination of his journalistic career came in 1894, the year before his death, with the publication of the literary review Revista Azul, of which he was an editor. The review was a weekly publication. The first edition is dated May 6, 1894; it was continued after Najera's death by his associates, until Oct. 11, 1896. This publication became one of the leading Spanish language literary reviews of the time, publishing poetry, stories and essays of many leading Latin American and European writers. Carlos Gómez del Prado cites a passage from Najera explaining the significance of the title: " . . . Porque en lo azul hay alas y porque vuelan a lo azul las esperanzas en bandadas. El azul no es un color: es un misterio . . . una virginidad intacta."³ In other words, the color blue may be said to embody the poetic search for an ideal "virginidad intacta" which forms the philosophical base of Najera's poetry.⁴

This use of blue was of course much in vogue with the French symbolist poets from whom Nájera took a great deal of his inspiration. It was used in 1888 by the Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío as the title of his first volume of poetry, generally considered the high point of the early phase of modernista poetry, but Nell Walker points out that Nájera had used the color in this context as early as 1880 in "Del libro azul" and it is safe to assume that this use of it was not taken entirely from Darío.⁵ Boyd G. Carter and Ivan Schulman have discussed in more detail the place of Nájera, along with José Martí, as a precursor or initiator of modernismo. Carter, in an article on Martí and Nájera⁶ argues that Nájera deserves the credit for introducing modernista preoccupations and techniques into Spanish American literature. Schulman, in a later article⁷ replies that both Martí and Nájera, especially in their prose, more or less simultaneously introduced the new style. For our purposes here, it is sufficient to understand that Nájera did begin the use of basic modernista techniques in the 1870's, along with Martí, and that Darío took up a style which was already established in the literature.

LITERARY LIFE OF THE TIME

Gutiérrez Nájera emerges as a figure much involved in the literary life of his time, through his connection with literary periodicals of the day and his wide acquaintance

with literature and literary figures prominent at the time. He never traveled outside of Mexico, and thus was not able to be a part of the French literary world which he so admired. It is ironic that a poet so cosmopolitan in taste led a seemingly provincial life, seldom even venturing away from his native Mexico City. Yet he was widely read in the literature of the day, and was personally acquainted with writers of the period, many of whom published in the Revista Azul. These writers included not only such leading Mexican authors as Federico Gamboa and Justo Sierra, but also translations of leading nineteenth-century writers like Gautier, Whitman and Tolstoy.⁸ The poet Justo Sierra, a close friend of Nájera, stated in his prologue to the first edition of Nájera's poetry the opinion that the strongest foreign influences were Musset, Gautier, and Juan Valera.⁹ Certainly Nájera's restrained and disciplined control of the Spanish language has much in common with the nearly classical style of Valera.

Nájera's prose forms a large part of his literary production and displays the same sensitivity to language as the poetry, although it lacks the spark of inspiration which gives the poetry unique life. It may be said that the prose is the expression essentially of the public man, the man of letters known and admired for his intellectual gifts, for the quality which Sierra characterizes as "gracia."¹⁰ His stories and essays are taken from the world around him,

observations on the human life which surrounded him. Even the more imaginative stories are basically comments upon life or literary conventions of the time. The poetry, on the other hand, may be best described as a more private expression, based, of course, on the poetic conventions of the French poets so admired by Nájera, but filled out and given unique life by a very personal, private spiritual struggle which is not so apparent in the rather foppish bourgeois newspaperman who looks out from photographs, complete with starched collar and lapel flower.

The best of his prose is found in the short stories, collected under the titles Cuentos frágiles and Cuentos color de humo. Most of these stories are in the melancholy mood so typical of Nájera, with the simple, elegant delicacy of style which is his hallmark; they are characterized by sensitive description and creation of mood. Some are humorous, showing the strain of satire which appears as well in the poetry.

The non-fiction prose is composed of articles written for publication as newspaper columns, articles concerning a wide variety of subjects taken from the contemporary scene. These articles make it clear that Nájera was no ivory tower dreamer, for all the imaginative and rather escapist aspects of his poetry and fiction. The articles display an interest in a wide variety of aspects of the bourgeois world of which the author was a part:

theater reviews, political comentary, travelogues, some social commentary. They show above all else a tendency to inject his personal opinions and thoughts into whatever he was writing, and the journalistic pieces emerge as really just an excuse for the author to muse on the life around him.

NAJERA'S PLACE IN MODERNISMO

The central problem in dealing with a modernista poet is the insoluble one of defining modernismo. No attempt will be made here to do so, but merely to suggest the general outlines of scholarly opinion and to situate Gutiérrez Nájera within the general scheme.

For all the elusiveness of an exact definition of the term, certain basic assumptions seem to be generally agreed upon. Rufino Blanco Fombona, in his basic study of the movement in El modernismo y los poetas modernistas (1929), the earliest general study, suggests basic characteristics which may be considered central to modernismo: "La poesía modernista cuenta rasgos psicológicos precisos: el pesimismo, el refinamiento verbal, la exaltacion de la sensibilidad; una actitud de espíritu rebelde, un desafío tácito, pero evidente, a todo lo viejo--imágenes, metrifricación, sentimientos, ideas--, un anhelo desbocado de hermosura y liberación."¹¹ To these he adds as well a preoccupation with form, sensuality, skepticism, lack of

moral preoccupations, sadness of spirit, and exoticism; in short, the general fin du siècle malaise which affected all European art of the late nineteenth century and especially the French, which the Spanish Americans took as their principal models. A deep spiritual unease, then, expressed in the context of French art and culture, is the basic ingredient of Spanish American modernismo. Central to such spiritual unease is the attendant desire for renewal and rejuvenation, spiritual as well as artistic. Ned Davison makes this point quite well in his excellent study, Modernism in Hispanic Literary Criticism: "The attitudes and uneasiness of the entire western world are merely exemplified in the disillusionments and rebellion that permeate French literature of the latter nineteenth century."¹² Added to this general unease in Spanish America was the writers' desire to break from imitation of European political and cultural ties and establish themselves as independent entities. Thus an attitude of artistic, if not spiritual, self-confidence is an often overlooked and very basic aspect of Spanish American modernismo. It is a matter of attitude, point of view, expressed by means of French artistic models.

The place of Gutiérrez Nájera in all of this is fairly well defined as belonging to the earlier period of modernismo. Hispanic literary criticism, for better or worse,

divides the modernista movement (or epoch, or school--all of these terms are used almost interchangeably to define it) into two periods, an earlier one of initiators of the movement and a later period of broader development.

The earlier period, encompassing the last two decades of the nineteenth century, was led by Nájera, José Martí, and Rubén Darío. The poetry of this period was much influenced by the nineteenth-century French poets, expressing feeling and states of mind through imagery, rhythm and color. Darío was the only one of the early group to continue working into the second period, which lasted into the first two decades of the twentieth century. The poetry of the later period incorporated the earlier preoccupation with symbol, imagery, rhythm and color, but also broadened to a more philosophical scope with a wider variety of themes. The leading poets of the second period were Leopoldo Lugones and Enrique González Martínez. The artistic self-confidence and maturity of the earlier period combined with the more universalized, philosophical base of the later poets to begin modern Spanish American poetry.

Thus Nájera is clearly a part of the early period, both because of the nature of his work and the span of his life. He is generally regarded as the most influential of the early group: "Escribir a la manera de Gutiérrez Nájera fue casi una moda, y muchas de sus ideas poéticas sirvieron de punto de partida a la inspiración de otros poetas."¹³

Nell Walker argues that to Nájera, rather than Darío, belongs the credit for the basic inspiration which gave the movement its impulse and basic character: "Still, Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera . . . became impregnated with the French spirit even before Darío, and attracted attention in his own country very soon after he began to write."¹⁴

The French influence, while strong, should not be exaggerated, for it had been present in Spanish American letters since the Neo-classicism of the eighteenth century and the Romanticism of the nineteenth. Nájera's achievement was to put an original personal experience into form by means of a set of basically French poetic conventions; he filled out the form with his own deeply personal experience and thus succeeded in giving his poetry a life of its own. Ned Davison points out an aspect of modernismo which is usually underestimated, that is its preoccupation with spiritual renewal: "The sense of discovery and rebuilding was essential to the modernista impulse. . . . Since art is a way to knowledge, an intuitive way, it becomes a kind of quasi religion . . . the pursuit of the illusory ideal."¹⁵ It is this poetic search for "the illusory ideal," expressed in an artistic and cultural context heavily influenced by the nineteenth-century French style, which gives Nájera's poetry its character.

NÁJERA'S LITERARY THEORY

Nájera was not a theorist or a philosopher, and there is no system of thought worked out in his writing. Nevertheless, there is a definite attitude toward the relationship between life and art which is apparent in his work, and is expressed specifically in an essay El arte y el materialismo, written in 1876 in reply to Francisco Sosa who had criticized a young poet (not Nájera himself) for wasting his time on something as unproductive as poetry. Boyd Carter, in his edition of the essay, summarizes the situation: "El futuro Duque Job refiere los juicios de Francisco Sosa por medio de citas textuales, y después procede a atacarlos. Dice que no es y no será nunca positivista, que juzga él con el corazón y no con la cabeza . . .".¹⁶

The essence of the ideas expressed is that man must escape the bondage of the physical body and physical world; freedom and "lo bello" are the key words which run throughout the essay--the freedom to escape material concerns and attain a higher beauty. This theme is the underlying one of his poetry: "Lo que nosotros combatimos y combatiremos siempre es esa materialización del arte, ese asqueroso y repugnante positivismo que en mal hora pretende introducir en la poesía; ese cartabón ridículo a que se pretende someter a todos los poetas, privándolos así de la libertad . . .".¹⁷

Nájera himself puts his feeling toward poetry in quasi-religious terms: "El arte es una escala constantemente ofrecida al espíritu humano para ascender a lo divino" ¹⁸ He then refers to art as "Esta regeneración del espíritu humano por la belleza" Poetry is, then, a means of renewing the tired human spirit. It should be noted that this impulse toward "lo divino" is not connected to any religious or philosophical system (with the possible exception of his youthful religious poems); it is a larger and deeper concern with the human spirit itself.

LITERARY CRITICISM ON NÁJERA

There exists no large body of criticism concerning the works of Gutiérrez Nájera. Most of the investigation concerning him consists of biographical and bibliographical work, with less attention to critical analysis of the poetry and prose itself.

The earliest study on Nájera's work is the prologue by Justo Sierra to the first edition (1896) of Nájera's poetry. This short essay is essentially an impressionistic description of the man as he was seen by his contemporaries. The picture that emerges is one of a most attractive personality, much liked by those around him and much admired for poetic talents. Sierra was himself a leading poet of the day, and a good friend of Nájera. The prologue is valuable for forming an idea of Nájera in relation to his time and place.

Nájera is mentioned prominently in early studies of the modernista movement, all of which identify him as a leader of the early phase of modernismo. The most valuable of the earlier studies are Rufino Blanco Fombona, El modernismo y los poetas modernistas (Madrid, 1929), and Isaac Goldberg, Studies in Spanish-American Literature (New York, 1920).

The earliest full-length study of Nájera was done by Nell Walker as a Master's thesis at the University of Missouri, and published in the University of Missouri Studies in 1927. This study, while limited in scope, is an excellent, very well written over-all study of the man and his work, both poetry and prose. Although not detailed in its examination, this work stands as probably the best general introduction to Nájera yet written.

The most detailed biographical and bibliographical work on Nájera has been done by E. K. Mapes and Boyd G. Carter. Mapes has done editions of Nájera's prose, including a Cuentos completos y otras narraciones, and an edition of Nájera's literary criticism in Obras. Crítica literaria, I. Carter has done two book-length studies, En torno a Gutiérrez Nájera and Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera--Estudio y escritos inéditos. Carter has succeeded Mapes as the leading Nájera authority.

The most detailed study of the literary output of Nájera has been done by Carlos Gómez del Prado in his book-

length study Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera, vida y obra. This study includes a biographical study of Nájera and analyses of both his prose and his poetry. Two chapters constitute the studies of the poetry, one based on theme, the other on technique. The weakness of the study is the lack of a systematic analysis of the entire poetry.

The best analytical study of Nájera's poetic technique has been done by Ivan Schulman in an article, "Función y sentido del color en la poesía de Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera." This article analyzes the color symbolism of the poetry and is most helpful in gaining an understanding of a basic Nájera technique. This article, and the later one, "Jose Martí y Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera: Iniciadores del modernismo (1875-1877)," have been collected in the book Génesis del modernismo along with other essays by Schulman on the early phase of the movement; these essays provide valuable insight into the poetry of the earliest modernistas.

Commentators often mention Nájera in discussions of Spanish American poetry, but such general comments do not constitute genuine literary criticism. The present study will attempt a more systematic analysis of the poetry than has been attempted up to the present time, examining the entire poetic production in chronological order to show the development both of the underlying themes and attitude, and studying also the basic poetic techniques used to

express the central themes. The study will be based on representative poems from Nájera's work. The text used for this analysis is that edited by Francisco González Guerrero.

CHAPTER I

THE EARLY POEMS

The early poetry of Gutiérrez Nájera was written while he was still in his formative adolescent years, and the poetry as well is clearly still in a formative state. The earliest poetry is religious, written in praise of a deeply felt, orthodox Roman Catholic faith. This poetry is accompanied by the early love poetry, which is rather trite praise of love and lovers, but which shows a pronounced pessimism about the possibility of attaining fulfillment in love. This pessimism is an attitude which pervades Nájera's poetry and later becomes a dominant theme in his mature poems. Carlos Gómez del Prado, commenting on this aspect of Nájera's poetry, says: " . . . dentro de su lirismo predomina la nota elegíaca; su lamento no sólo abarca el final de la vida misma, sino que también el del amor que pasa o se olvida, o el de las efímeras ilusiones."¹

The religious poetry is on the whole quite sentimental and trite, but there are moments of fluency and feeling which show a genuine poetic talent at work underneath the stock phrases. Speaking of the personal, subjective emotion which characterizes Nájera's poetry, Antonio Acevedo Escobedo says: "En la poesía subjetiva ya cultivada de preferencia por nuestros románticos, Gutiérrez Nájera introdujo el elemento prócer de la distinción. Lo que en

sus predecesores fue desnudez autobiográfica y confesión impudente, en él fue confidencia velada y sugerencia íntima. . . ."² Its originality lies in inventive use of language and in evidence of the deep emotional sensitivity and emotional conflicts which lie at the heart of the entire poetry and find full development in the later, mature masterpieces. One should read this poetry, then, not as great poetry in itself but as the beginning stages of a developing talent.

A typical example which illustrates many facets of the early period is "Al corazón de Jesús,"³ written when Nájera was sixteen. The poem is addressed to Christ in His praise. Like the major part of Nájera's poetry, it is written in the form of a first person monologue in which an unidentified speaker reveals his emotions and feelings. This technique allows the revelation of deeply felt human emotions in a detached manner; as a result the poetry is intensely human yet not highly personal. The attitude of the speaker or narrator thus sets the tone of each poem, establishing the basic emotional frame. Addressing himself to Nájera's use of this technique, Acevedo Escobedo says: " . . . por vez primera se desvanecían las líneas concretas del suceso anecdótico para temblar con la angustia universal y humana; por primera vez se establecía entre el lector y el poeta esa colaboración que no logra sino la poesía digna de tal nombre."⁴

"Al corazón de Jesús" communicates a deeply felt emotional experience, the worship of Jesus as a personal redeemer in the orthodox Roman Catholic tradition. Thus the tone of this poem, established by means of the speaker's personal attitude, is one of religious exaltation, of man reaching out to something higher and more wonderful than himself. Although the poem is a rather stock religious expression, the lyricism which envelops the emotion and the eloquence with which it is expressed reveal the germ of Nájera's later masterpieces.

The first stanza establishes the emotion basic to this poem and prevalent throughout Nájera's poetry, that of reaching out in search of some world larger or finer than immediate surroundings. Here, of course, this emotion is expressed in a religious context--"solo alzó hasta Ti mi pobre acento" The fundamental state of mind which is revealed here is his desire to reach out and attain God, a higher reality:

Sólo se alzó hasta Ti mi pobre acento
 en oración cristiana;
 nunca osó temeroso el pensamiento,
 de humilde inspiración bajo el amparo,
 llegar hasta tu asiento,
 que cercan los querubes
 y sostienen las nubes
 sobre el ropaje azul del firmamento. (I, p. 31)

These lines show several basic characteristics. The most important and revealing is the graceful flow of language, a fusion of meaning, image, rhythms and rhyme into

a whole structure to communicate the desired effect. For example, in this stanza the image of the heavenly throne is condensed into the three short lines ending in "asiento," "querubes," and "nubes"; the lines are united not only in the image itself but also in the length of the lines, becoming shorter and more rapid in the lines containing the image itself, and in the rhyming of "querubes/nubes". Thus the poem's basic experience of worship is immediately communicated by tone, image, and meter.

The preoccupation with reaching for higher reality continues in the image of praise which, like an eagle, leaves earth and soars into heaven: " . . . águila altanera que . . . la tierra deja . . . y va a perderse en la celeste esfera." (p. 32) The preoccupation with escaping earthly reality, disappearing into something higher, especially as suggested in the phrase "va a perderse," is a basic theme, although it is only in the early period that we see it so consistently expressed in orthodox religious terms. Even at this early stage, however, we can see developing the germ of Nájera's major poetic theme.

The poem continues the theme of reaching out to something higher than human reality: "a Ti vuelas mi acento." There is, besides the obvious religious symbolism, evidence of a larger, more philosophical concern with attaining fullness of experience:

. . . de tu esencia pura
 un átomo vertiste en la creatura . . .
 ¡germinando en su humilde inteligencia
 los sueños inmortales del mañana!" (p. 32)

The phrase "esencia pura" establishes the feeling of completeness and perfection central to man's search for a higher reality outside himself which would complete his imperfect nature. The image of pouring a drop of this essence into man, yet leaving him incomplete and unsatisfied, communicates vividly the eternal human search for perfection which underlies so much of Nájera's poetry. The phrase " . . . germinando . . . sueños inmortales . . ." captures the human feeling of longing and yearning for completeness.

Religious feelings are also expressed in terms of light and color: " . . . iris de paz que en el ceruleo cielo . . ." (p. 34) and " . . . astro que vierte su fulgor divino" (p. 34) He speaks, too, of prayers which

. . . vuelan a la celeste altura
 como perfumes de fragrantes flores. (p. 34)

This imagery shows a tendency to express feelings with sensory allusions which communicate a desired quality common to both an interior feeling and the external allusion.

The poem, however, also displays some of the negative traits which detract from many of Nájera's poems, one of which is a tendency to wordiness and emotionalism. The religious emotion, although undoubtedly genuine, becomes somewhat histrionic:

Nunca, nunca, te pierda el alma mía,
sé mi escudo, mi norte y mi consuelo. (p. 35)

These lines are examples of the emotionalism which Acevedo Escobedo calls "La estridencia del viejo romántico."⁵ Also in the same vein are many such lines as "Por Ti mi frente al polvo se humillara." (p. 35) The emotion, genuine though it may be, loses its effect by too much repetition.

All the poetry from this period shows the same tendency toward lack of control over emotions and language: for example the sententious opening of "La fe de mi infancia"

Santa, tres veces santa la bendita,
sencilla religión . . . (I, p. 61)

This poem is an early example of the spiritual conflict which forms the basis of much of Nájera's poetry, that is, the disillusionment with the world and the inability to attain anything higher. In this poem, however, the emotion is in the form of a rather smug and self-satisfied religious feeling. The narrator relates that as a child he was tempted to doubt by the imperfections of the world, but has retained his faith. The result is rather more like a sermon than a poem.

The first traces of disillusionment in childhood are caused by the imperfection of much of life:

la gloria, ese magnífico venero
que el corazón anhela palpitando,
con sarcasmo miré descolorida
tras el cansancio de la estéril vida. (p. 62)

The "sarcasmo" and "estéril" are rather strong words implying a feeling of bitterness. The word "descolorida" suggests

something which has been whole or healthy which has now turned foul or sour.

A central conflict in the poetry of Nájera is evident in a line concerning the intrusion of reality into otherwise satisfied lives:

. . . muy triste, en la mañana
de nuestras encantadas ilusiones,
palpitar la realidad . . . (p. 62)

The verb "palpitar" applied to reality communicates the feeling of an insistent, intrusive, realization which will not be stilled. These lines convey the feeling of a state of mind or emotion which finds itself in a great deal of tension, torn between the desire for emotional safety and security and the desire to expand experience beyond immediate surroundings. In this particular poem, however, absolute faith wins out: " . . . hallé mi fe de niño toda entera." (p. 64)

The perfection or higher reality which is the desired goal expressed in poems of this theme is often identified with the color blue, representing the ideal, or distant, unattainable perfection, e.g. when he speaks of a guardian angel:

. . . guarda su pupila
el lontananza azul del porvenir. (p. 58)

The color blue, then, may symbolize, in Nájera's poetry as in much modernista poetry, an ideal and perfect reality to which man can only aspire. This reality may be connected

with the reality of poetry, as in the poem "Mariposas" (1887, I, p. 137) in which the blue butterfly represents poetry: " . . . la azul que me dijo: poeta." Or it may, as in these earlier poems, be connected with the idea of spiritual perfection. In any case, blue represents the ideal. In the words of one critic: "Idealismo y poesía se identifican con el color [azul]." ⁶

The early love poetry incorporates many of the same characteristics of the religious poetry, and was written during the same period, (the 1870's), when Nájera was in his late adolescent years. Technically, we see the same talent at work, with flowing rhythms and rhyme, color, and imagery. Thematically, the poems are rather sad, standard love poems praising the beauty of the beloved but lamenting the impossibility of fulfillment. In this can be seen the development of Nájera's dominant theme: the search for the ideal, for impossible fulfillment and the resulting disillusionment. However, it is expressed here more explicitly than in the religious poems.

Probably the best poems from this period are the lighter love lyrics in which the poet has control of his lyric gift and does not attempt to express deep philosophical ideas, but simply to recreate lyrically the many facets of the love experience.

An excellent example of the lyrical love poetry is the pleasant lyric, "Serenata," (I, p. 81). It is a melodious

love song, standard and even a bit trite in content, which is given life by the rhythmic and musical verse. It is a mixture of verse forms, used according to the intrinsic need within the poem for the expression of varying emotions and not according to a preconceived metrical form. Form thus grows out of content; mixing verse forms according to the type of emotion expressed in each section.

The first stanza sets the mood, theme and situation with short, rhythmic lines addressed to the beloved:

Tranquila está la noche,
sereno el viento;
a ti vuela amoroso
mi pensamiento:
rosa temprana
abre por Dios las puertas
de tu ventana. (p. 81)

The tone is set with such words as "tranquilo, sereno"; the speaker's mood is expressed in the phrase "vuela amoroso . . ."; the mood is one of light-hearted love. The second stanza continues the same situation, merely elaborating on the love theme. The lines here are longer, more even, more suited to calmer exposition of feeling than the more spontaneous feeling of the first verse:

Quando en la noche la blanca luna
su tibio rayo le presta al suelo,
yo en alas siempre de mi fortuna
dejo la tierra, me elevo al cielo.
Y allí contemplo tu faz divina;
con los querubes te veo sentada;
mi altiva frente también se inclina
ante tu imagen, Lola adorada;
y cuando cruzas por los jardines
te sigue un coro de serafines. (p. 81)

A feeling of purity is evoked with the color white-- "la blanca luna su tibio rayo le presta el suelo"--the earth is given a certain mood, seen in a certain perspective, that of a setting of beauty and purity, with the mixture of earth and white moonlight. A preoccupation with attaining purity and higher reality is expressed as he imagines himself rising into the purer world of the sky to meet the beloved. She represents, then, something finer than the speaker feels himself to be which inspires him to summon up his strength to attain.

The poem continues to a total of fourteen stanzas, similar in length to these opening ones, shifting verse forms from the rhythmic, lyrical passages to the more even verse of the stanzas in which he explains his passion in a series of comparisons. She is "estrella de la mañana," and "flor lozana."

The speaker openly names her the ideal to which he aspires. He is clearly describing more than an individual or even an idealized figure. The imagery with which she is described imbues her with qualities above those of ordinary mortals. The figure of Lola is thus universalized, through imagery, to the level of a symbol of perfection:

En mis sueños de gloria
tú eres el cielo
donde residen mis ilusiones . . . (p. 83)

In this image he is really describing or fusing into one image the feeling of search for an ideal reality. We have

seen the same basic feeling expressed in religious terms; here it is expressed in amatory terms. Clearly, human illusions, not a lover, ideal or otherwise, are the real underlying concern in this poem. When, in the next stanza, he says: "¿Por qué solo en el valle, Lola, me dejas?", what is being described is not only the loss of an individual but the whole range of desires which she has been made to symbolize in the poem.

Another poem in the same vein is "Niña de ardientes ojos," (I, p. 85). This poem is also addressed to the beloved named Lola, although it is more purely lyric, more intensely personal than "Serenata." It does not mix verse forms here, but uses a short, rhythmic line which carries quickly from one line and thought to another in an uninterrupted melodic flow. In this poem the language is better controlled than in most of the poems of this period, and does not fall into the wordiness and redundancy which affect most of them. In this poem the emotion of desire is again embodied in the figure of the girl; here the poem is more disciplined, more tightly condensed into the central figure and image; there is no digression into the prosy, repetitious verses of the other poem.

The figure of the girl, or the sought after ideal, is an elusive, mysterious, fragile figure:

Niña de ardientes ojos,
 fúlgida estrella,
 pura como el capullo
 de la azucena;
 oye benigna
 los lastimeros ayes
 del que te admira. (p. 85)

The girl is thus a compound of vitality--"ardientes"--and purity--"la azucena"--both qualities which stimulate human desire. The second stanza incorporates elements which mix colors into a prismatic image which captures the elusive, delicate quality which the girl represents:

Tiñe de azul y rosa
 temblando el alba
 los vidrios de colores
 de tu ventana. (p. 85)

This image is an excellent example of a technique which Gutiérrez Nájera uses throughout his poetry: that is, the expression of a central feeling or sensation by the association of qualities. The elusive morning light playing on window panes suggests the same quality as the elusive delicacy of the ideal beauty which he seeks. Thus interior feeling is expressed through sensory means.

The last stanza of the poem is the most personal, the most complicated. The basic emotion of much of the poetry is evident here--a melancholy, even self-pitying sadness. The most revealing line is " . . . todo me falta." A sense of loss is the essential state of mind. Here condensed into a romantic situation, this emotion is the underlying one throughout Nájera's poetry. The sense of searching is expressed in the first line of this stanza when the speaker

refers to himself as an "Errante peregrino." Here the context is that of a typical lovesick youth but the feeling of loss, of incompleteness, pervades all of Nájera's work.

A longer poem which displays both the faults and strengths of the poetry of this period is "Página negra" (I, p. 97). The poem recounts a dream. Basically a very bad poem because it is repetitious and melodramatic, it shows a considerable ability to establish a mood and tone. The evening setting is one of several such scenes in which sunset is used to evoke the desired emotion:

. . . la tarde perezosa ya moría
y en el azul de la elevada esfera
la noche sus crespones extendía. (p. 97)

The particular feeling of sunset--quiet, nostalgic, reflective--is the feeling needed here to set the mood for remembering an emotional experience. The tone is enhanced by such phrases as "negras nubes," and "gruesas gotas . . . con melancólico sonido" (p. 97). The speaker's feeling is summarized in the phrase " . . . profunda tristeza/presagio cierto de dolor futuro." (p. 98). The dream is of a friend who admonishes him:

Ya del destino la segura airada
va a marchitar tus ilusiones bellas,
y a apagar en tu cielo las estrellas,
y a arrojarle en las sombras de la nada. (p.98)

At this point the poem loses control over both emotion and language and becomes an example of Nájera's poetry at his worst. Instead of a tightly disciplined expression of emotion or lyrical feeling, the poem degenerates

into tiresome repetition of the same emotion and becomes melodramatic: " . . . y por primera vez, lloré y maldije . . ." (p. 101). The poem here becomes much too obvious and crude, falling into self-pity, as in its closing lines:

Desde entonces mi vida es un infierno,
desde entonces mi canto es el gemido
y es desde entonces mi llorar eterno,
y está mi corazón de muerte herido. (p. 103)

A work which, while not a particularly good poem, is very good evidence of the essential state of mind underlying the poetry of this early period is "Luz y sombra" (I, p. 105) in which the narrator contrasts his sad state to that of the happier object of his affection, and goes on at rather tiresome length about his inability to find satisfaction.

The theme is an almost obsessive sense of life escaping from the speaker, of life and vitality slipping away from him. This is expressed in a series of images: "Yo soy el ave errante que solitaria llora . . ."; "Yo soy brisa que pasa . . . el sol que se hunde" These images employ a common technique of association of qualities. A visual image is employed which communicates the interior feeling being expressed, both through the basic visual picture and through other qualities present in the image. These images are built around a subject plus verb. The subject in each case is a non-human physical thing--ave, brisa, sol--activated by a single verb--llora, pasa, hunde. The desired feeling is expressed in both the subject and

the action. All three subjects are elusive, mobile, unreachable--the bird and sun because of distance, the breeze because of intangibility. Thus when the speaker associates himself with this particular group of objects, the collected associations communicate the feeling of a life which is passing away, expiring--certainly a cause for melancholy. Verbs, of course, express action, and the actions expressed here all amplify the feeling already suggested, giving it further connotations and expressiveness. The strongest verb is "llora," which besides expressing an action also expresses a very definite state of mind--sadness and depression. The other verbs, "pasa" and "se hunde," do not carry the meaning of sadness, but do communicate the feeling of something escaping from one's grasp.

The poem continues in the same vein, becoming rather loose and repetitious both structurally and thematically, simply restating the same idea, adding nothing either in meaning or technique: "Yo soy la negra noche . . . la navecilla . . ." (pp. 105-106). A contrast is established between the speaker and his beloved, suggesting in her the opposite qualities to those associated with him: "sé tú la blanca aurora . . . la blanca estrella que alumbre . . ." (p. 105-106), qualities which suggest positive attainment of happiness.

The poem goes on at length, restating: "Yo vivo entre sollozos . . ." (p. 106), "Mi vida es un suspiro . . ."

(p. 108) etc. There is lacking here the discipline and control to unite the poem and prevent it from losing itself in words. There is a lack of the inventive and original rhythms and rhyme which do so much to unify and control Nájera's more successful work, e.g., "Niña de ardientes ojos."

The self-assured religious faith sensed in the religious poems develops into growing doubts. Many poems of this early period are neither specifically religious nor amatory, but convey a mood or state of mind, usually one of conflict between faith and doubt. In the poem, "La duda," it is clear that the poet does not possess such an absolute faith as that indicated in poems like "La fe de mi infancia." There is an obvious conflict between faith and doubt, between optimism and pessimism, throughout Nájera's poetry, even in this early period. From this conflict or tension comes much of the creative impulse behind the poetry.

The doubt in "La duda" is not expressed in specifically religious terms, or in any specific doubt. Rather, it seems to be a fundamental crisis of confidence, an awareness (which the speaker would rather avoid) that life is not going to bring the fulfillment desired. The doubt here is a formless, hovering shadow ("sombra horrible") with no particular shape or substance; it thus can be taken to represent a generalized state of mind and not a questioning about any particular circumstance.

The poem is, like so many from this period, rather like the shadow--shapeless. It is a monologue by the speaker addressed to the shadow, and is in reality a sort of catalog of troubles, in very generalized terms. He begins with a melodramatic outburst to the shadow-- "Aparta, sombra horrible" . . . and continues throughout the poem with such statements. He attempts to find images which will express in tangible things his state of mind (like the "Yo soy brisa que pasa," etc. of "Luz y sombra") but here is less successful. Examples: " . . . y roto está en pedazos/ mi triste corazón"; "como puñal agudo/ me hiere el corazón"; and "con tu hálito de averno/ mataste mi creencia." These images express the idea and communicate well enough, but they do not sufficiently condense the emotion into a vivid, original form; they are, in a word, trite. Also rhythm is not employed to best advantage here, as it is in Nájera's best poems. The lines are short, moving rapidly along from one to the next, with an irregular beat and no particular rhyme pattern, in an apparent attempt to reproduce or suggest the agitated state of mind the poem implies. Rhythm and image, however, are not well integrated and condensed enough to have the needed effect of instantaneous communication of emotion.

The poem, then, is valuable as an insight into the basic theme of conflict which underlies the poetry of this period, as well as into some of the most typical techniques

which unfortunately do not work too well in this particular case.

As an insight into this conflict, it is interesting to compare this poem with one written in the same year (1877) entitled "Dios," in which the speaker states unequivocally:

Los mares en tormenta o en bonanza
nos revelan, Señor, tu omnipotencia;

En todo está tu poderoso aliento,
y es un canto a tu amor Naturaleza . . . (p. 49)

The contrast between the faith of this poem and the doubt of "La duda," even though neither is a particularly good poem, is a clear indication of the interior conflict which provides the poetic impulse toward revelation of deeply felt emotions which find expression in Nájera's poetry. Generally speaking, the most successful poems are those, like "Niña de ardientes ojos," which maintain a control over emotion by means of the detached, first person yet impersonal, monologue form. The least successful are those in which the monologue degenerates into a personalized, emotional outcry.

An ability to suggest, to create mood and feeling also develops throughout the early poetry. In "Página negra" mood is created in the opening lines, but is not sustained throughout the poem. In "Ráfagas" (I, p. 133), a mood is created which is sustained throughout.

The poem is an enigmatic one, with no certain interpretation. It suggests and implies feeling and state

of mind. It is, most simply, a scene at evening in which a riderless horse appears and crosses the scene, addressed by the speaker or narrator of the poem.

The dominant tone is of mystery, expectancy, created in the opening stanzas which set the scene:

La noche se acerca; ya asaltan al cielo
cien nubes siniestras de negro color;
las aves abaten, temblando, su vuelo,
y en alto picacho se abriga el condor.

¡Qué negra es la noche! ¡qué triste el ruido
del trueno que imita titánica voz!
Fosfórica lumbre de rayo encendido
alumbraba doquiera mi marcha veloz. (p. 133)

Evening seems to be Nájera's favorite time of day for poetry, and it is useful to keep in mind the essential feeling of this hour of the day. It is the end of the day, the end of activity, not the beginning, as is morning. It thus implies rest, perhaps tiredness. The approaching end of day adds the mystery and uncertainty we feel at facing the night.

This feeling of mystery is apparent in the first words: "la noche se acerca." It is not, in the poet's eye, the end of day, but the beginning of night, the time of mystery. This feeling is increased by references to "cien nubes de negro color." The insistence on night and on the color black creates a dark, foreboding tone.

Life and movement enter the picture in the form of birds: "aves . . . temblando" and " . . . se abriga el condor." The birds "abaten su vuelo," also creating expectancy and foreboding.

The meter serves to enhance the tone of calm and stillness. It is in four line stanzas, with lines of equal length, lines of twelve syllables. The rhyme is ABAB in each stanza with consonant rhyme. The overall effect, together with a regularly controlled rhythm which brings the stress to rest on the end of each line and stanza, is that of controlled feeling, understated emotion which is implied and felt rather than shown.

The first three stanzas introduce the scene and atmosphere; the fourth consolidates the mood and introduces the speaker, preparing for the second part of the poem. The stanza is essentially a summary of elements already introduced: "¿Qué negra es la noche . . ." etc. The speaker unobtrusively introduces himself with a first person possessive: " . . . mi marcha veloz."

With the fifth stanza the main body of the poem begins with the introduction of the galloping horse:

Corcel, al galope traspasa el sendero;
cercano del valle se mira el confín;
nervioso sacude tus miembros de acero
y tiende a los vientos tu espléndida crin. (p. 134)

The horse's attitude and presence are all important; this is suggested by the adjective "nervioso" and the noun "acero" in the lines: "nervioso sacude . . .". Strength in a state of restless agitation, then, is embodied in the horse.

The next lines also stress the horse's strength and courage, and his agitation:

. . . tus cascos ferrados estampa en el suelo
y el eco repita tu ronco piafar. (p. 134)

At this point, with the atmosphere and main actors introduced, the rather static scene is changed by rain and wind. The rainstorm stirs emotions and the feeling is made even more forbidding: " . . . y sombras envuelven la tierra doquier." (p. 134).

Other elements are introduced to stress the agitation and mystery present; a lion is hidden in his den, with "ojos ardientes" suggesting power and intense emotion. There is a "hiena perdida" and "serpientes de fuego" in the lightning.

The poem has been carefully built, starting with a rather muted, foreboding tone, increasing this to a tension and feeling which have grown increasingly strong, and quietly introducing two main protagonists into the scene: the speaker and the horse. There is then suggested a link between the two. The horse is clearly a powerful animal, a source of strength. Does the horse then embody strength and ability to act which the speaker lacks? This possibility is implied in the last stanza in which the speaker addresses the animal, but in the first person plural:

Huyamos, huyamos; al viento tendida,
piafando, sacude tu espléndida crin,
y cruza los valles sin freno ni brida
espuma brotando de tu ancha nariz. (p. 134)

The most likely interpretation seems to be that the horse embodies the strength to move, to act and to escape from a

scene of undefinable tension. The central idea, escape from an unpleasant situation, is clear enough. This idea, of course, is a variation of Najera's basic theme, but here it is expressed with more emotion than the resignation which we see in most of his work. Regardless of its exposition of a basic Najera theme, the poem succeeds as a creation of mood, an expression of feeling by means of visual imagery; the poem achieves a balance between descriptive evocation of mood in the first stanzas and the expression of a subjective state of mind by means of the image of the horse and the speaker's identification with it. Mood and image combine to create a total effect.

If the strange, disturbing world of "Ráfagas" can be taken to be the unpleasant reality from which the poet wishes to escape, "Casa blanca" (I, p. 137) would seem to be a suggestion of the ideal world of purity into which he would flee. In this poem, not as successful as the other, he creates another physical place, a setting which the speaker transforms with his emotions, or makes correspond to them. The poem lacks the balance between mood and personal feeling, the vivid central image of "Rafagas," and therefore only partially succeeds.

The scene is another woodland glade, " . . . valle de flores y aromas . . ." (p. 137), which seen through his eyes, takes on the character of the poet's emotions. The setting is clearly a positive one, seen in the first

stanza with its emphasis on pleasant flowers, aromas, the sun--" . . . rayo acaricia de fúlgido sol." (p. 137).

The house is a "mansión de palomas" (p. 137); doves, the standard symbol of peace and love, are used to good effect here to establish the essential feeling of the place and the poet's attitude toward it. The place is "nido de sueños" and "morada de amor" (p. 137), in other words, a general representation of everything positive, desirable, spiritual, pure.

The rhythm of this poem also contributes significantly to the total effect. Examining the first stanza, as a whole, from this perspective, one sees the pattern which follows throughout:

Oculto en un valle de flores y aromas
que el rayo acaricia de fúlgido sol,
yo tengo una casa, mansión de palomas,
que es nido de sueños, morada de amor. (p. 137)

The meter is, on the surface, like that of "Ráfagas," four line stanzas, of regular twelve syllable lines rhyming ABAB. The same basic structure is used to quite different effect. The principal difference is in the beat of the rhythm. In "Ráfagas" we saw a rather flat, taut line communicating the constrained emotion of the poem. Here, we see a lighter, rather lively rhythm with a more pronounced beat which carries the reader along rapidly, involving him almost effortlessly in the light, pleasant feeling which permeates the poem. This understated yet

effective use of different rhythms is evidence of one of Nájera's most effective poetic techniques.

The poem is divided into two distinct parts, so distinct that they really do not complement one another. The poet's unfortunate lack of control is clear. A better poem would have resulted had he simply stopped before losing control, or perhaps written two distinct poems. The first and better part is the description of the ideal house; this is the first fifteen stanzas. The second and weaker part, the last thirteen stanzas, is a love complaint addressed to one Lola, a poetic beloved who in many poems of this period causes our poet more anguish than she appears to be worth. The ostensible connection between the two parts is that Lola is all that is lacking to make the scene perfect bliss, a matter of opinion in any case.

At any rate, the first part is of greater interest and value. It continues in the mood and situation created in the first stanza, painting an imaginary, ideal world of flowers, breezes, turtle doves and other agreeable, pleasant surroundings. The scene is pastoral--the peaceful, harmonious, intact and natural world of the traditional pastoral of Garcilaso. This rather traditional scene should be appreciated in the larger context of Nájera's poetry. The constant theme is escape to a pure, ideal world which he never seems quite able to attain. This scene of peace would seem to represent that emotion of peace of mind and fulfillment which is the ideal.

It is an elegant, artificial world, typical of the aesthetic favored by the modernista poets. It is, in short, a typical escape world for a delicate poetic sensibility. This elegance is seen throughout in the sensuous descriptions, tending to luxury:

Trepando en sus tapias el musgo y la yedra,
la esmaltan y cubren de fresco verdor,
y brillan las aguas en taza de piedra
cascadas de perlas lanzando en redor. (p. 138)

The emphasis on such beautiful material things as "aguas en taza de piedra," and "cascadas de perlas" is evidence of the visual, tactile, and sensory sensations of all types, mixing or associating the senses in an understated and delicate manner. There is here an association of visual beauty, as in the phrase "brillan las aguas," with associations of the visual and tactile sensations of the pearls, and a suggestion of sound in "cascadas . . . lanzando." Throughout there is a constant concern with color--"blancos rosales," and "verde arrayán." The use of color is most successful in a typical association of white and blue:

¡Qué bella se mira mi blanca casita
a orillas de un lago de límpido azul! (p. 138)

The white, representing purity and goodness, and the blue, suggesting the poetic ideal, the indefinable and elusive, bring together his two most common coloristic uses. In the same stanza the house is compared to a dove resting "en nido amoroso de gasas y tul." This emphasis on such delicate material as "gasas y tul" stresses the poetic delicacy of

the ideal world and is a good example of Najera's use of association of qualities of material things to express the quality of a feeling or attitude which is intangible.

In the next stanza, the dawn seems to suggest purity, a higher reality with a suggestion of spirituality, leading to a religious association when the "pálido albor" and the "sacra campana" make the earth "un canto al Señor." This is the only hint of real religious feeling in the poem, but the essential feeling of purity and spirituality which pervade it certainly suggest an association with the feeling seen in more specifically religious poems.

The last stanza in this first section of the poem brings all of these feelings and associations to a summation:

Allí todo es bello, perfumes y brisas,
arrullos y trinos, la fuente y la flor.
Parece que tienen los cielos sonrisas,
las auras suspiros, los campos amor. (p. 139)

All the senses are brought into association with the central theme and feeling: smell (perfumes); feeling (brisas); sound (arrullos y trinos); and sight (flor, sonrisas). The rhythm of the verse as well as the meaning of the words bring the stanza to rest on the word "amor," which serves as a summary of all the feeling he is associating with his ideal state of mind.

The second half of the poem, the love poem to Lola, is not really worth detailed consideration, except in that

the idealized figure of the lover completes the picture of his ideal state. The strongest feeling in the poem is expressed in this part: "solloza en tu ausencia la amante paloma" (p. 140), and the poet unfortunately loses control once again and falls into exaggeration "sin ti, blanca aurora, no existe la luz." (p. 141).

To end the discussion of this segment of Nájera's poetry, perhaps the most instructive poem is "Después del vals" (I, p. 171). This is the most bitter, disillusioned poem to date (1879), and is much more openly bitter in tone than most of his work; yet the very intensity of feeling makes the poem quite valuable as a means of understanding the state of mind and emotional conflict which form the basis of the trajectory which we can see developing, the maturity of feeling leading to disillusionment and spiritual anguish.

The poem is addressed to a lover who has, in effect, jilted the speaker, apparently during the waltz in question. The setting at a function as elegant as a waltz, aristocratic in feeling if not in fact, shows his deep psychological roots in the elegant, controlled, rather fastidious bourgeoisie of the late nineteenth century with its aspiration to aristocratic sensibility.

The form of the poem, as usual, contributes significantly to the total effect. It is in a series of

eleven short stanzas addressed, in the first person singular, to the beloved who has betrayed him. The lines are short, with a flat, taut rhythm which conveys intense emotion, very controlled and let out only in short bursts.

The essence of the problem is disloyalty, a lover who is not true:

. . . tú me enseñaste a mentir,
yo te enseñaré a olvidar. (p. 171)

The real problem or concern is a lack of genuineness, of sincerity and lack of emotion which can last long enough to reach fulfillment:

¿Qué soy joven? En efecto;
pero es tu reparo loco:
la juventud es defecto
que se quita poco a poco. (p. 172)

The theme is then still another variation on the basic one of seeking fulfillment, genuine emotion which will last and bring satisfaction. Also connected with this is the theme of passing time, a common enough theme in poetry, but given a particular coloration by its connection in the speaker's mind with the problem of finding fulfillment:

Es cosa que da tristeza
pensar en mi condición:
tengo *vieja* la cabeza
y joven el corazón. (p. 172)

These lines show an increasingly depressed state of mind and increasing pessimism. The speaker's desires,

emotions, and feelings are young and vibrant, in need of fulfillment, but his reason is growing more experienced and is saying that this is an impossibility.

No esperes con tu boato
 pescar al fin un marido,
 que, si tu amor es barato,
 es muy caro tu vestido. (p. 172)

These lines are rather curious. Perhaps he has just experienced, while searching idealistically for love, someone interested only in less spiritual selfishness. He is concerned, in any case, with superficiality, lack of genuine substance and emotion. Perhaps it is this baseness or lack of sincerity, which is observable in any time and place, which leads to final disillusionment.

The final stanza shows disillusion in most bitter terms:

¿Crees que me gustan a mí
 las morenas? ¡Puede ser! . . .
 Me gusta toda mujer
 que no se parezca a ti (p. 173)

Of course, it is easy to read too much into the emotion of this poem. Perhaps it is after all only a lighter expression of the age old lover's complaint. Taken in the context of his overall work, however, there does seem to be more to it than that. The lack of emotional honesty, of sincerity and genuineness fits so well into Nájera's essential concern with spiritual fulfillment that the poem is best understood in that light.

CHAPTER II

POEMS OF CONFLICT, 1880-1887

In the poems of this period, midway in the literary career of Gutiérrez Nájera, a basic conflict emerges as the essential theme of the poetry, a conflict between a feeling of dissatisfaction with the world as it is and a longing for an existence which would be more meaningful and fulfilling. We see the same themes discussed as in the earlier work, but they are developed into poetry of broader scope, more meditative, more original. These poems might best be termed mood poems for, in general, there is more concern with expressing a state of mind and conveying a mood.¹ The basic mood which emerges from a reading of the poems is one of rather quiet contemplation, melancholy in some instances, but always based upon a perception of an essential inability to alleviate the emotions of dissatisfaction, longing, loneliness, and sadness.

Technically, the poems do not differ greatly from the earlier period, showing the same use of varying verse forms and rhythms, fitting the form to the mood and to the emotion expressed in the poem. However, we see somewhat less use of rhythm, more development of the ability to create mood through vocabulary and imagery.

The only specifically religious poem of this group is "De las neuróticas" (I, p. 347), in which religious doubt

is linked with a general feeling of disquiet at the realization that all is not as it should be, that life does not bring the satisfaction promised by religion. Essentially the poem is a revelation of this uneasy state of mind by means of imagery and word choice, and is composed of three fairly short sections expressing the basic mood and leading up to the final image. The poem is a monologue in which a first person speaker reveals his preoccupation with doubt; the first section establishes the tone and mood:

Pálido cuerpo viajero
 que dejas la juventud,
 di: ¿quién será el carpintero
 que labrará tu ataud?
 Alma triste y silenciosa
 que ya del mundo te vas,
 en la tierra de que fosa
 para siempre dormirás?
 Ojos de llorar cansados,
 ¿a quiénes, decid, vereis
 junto al lecho arrodillados
 cuando apagándoos estéis?
 Corazón lleno de penas
 que todos olvidarán
 ¿qué almas buenas, que almas buenas
 en mi tumba llorarán? (I, p. 347).

In this section the speaker is essentially addressing himself, revealing a preoccupation with passing time and unease at the prospect of what the future will bring. The section is in the form of questions addressed to the earthly human body as the impermanent container of earthly life. The speaker addresses three aspects of the human organism-- "cuerpo . . . alma . . . ojos . . . corazón"--all with an attitude of quiet desperation at their impermanence. The

choice of adjectives establishes the attitude toward these manifestations of human life--"pálido . . . triste y silenciosa . . . cansados . . . lleno de penas." Thus a precise application of adjectives establishes firm control over the emotions being expressed in the monologue.² The questions addressed to the human form, and by extension to all human life, stress a feeling of impermanence and a resulting inability to attain fulfillment in life.

With the essential mood of disquiet thus established, the scene of the monologue shifts to the inside of a church and the poem takes on a religious coloration. The title itself expresses a feeling of disorder, which is developed in the first section, then applied to a specific human situation, the desire for religious fulfillment which remains unsatisfied.

Still in monologue form, the speaker finds himself in a church desirous of receiving communion and thus, in the Roman Catholic tradition, uniting himself with the health and perfection of God. The desire for communion surges within him, linked to the memory of childhood innocence:

Súbitamente los cirios arden,
la campanilla suena otra vez,
y me arrodillo como en las horas
frescas de mi niñez. (p. 349)

There is in this stanza a quickening of movement, a developing dramatic situation. From the establishment of mood in the first section, the poem has moved to a dramatic situation in

miniature which forms a visual image. In this stanza, the subjective desire expressed in the poem reaches a sort of climax, with the effect heightened by the candles and bells, and terminating in the image of the speaker before the altar like a child; the basic emotion is thus a rather child-like desire to be effortlessly restored to health and wholeness. The priest appears to serve the mass, but fulfillment eludes the speaker:

Yo me arrodillo . . . Pero ¿la hostia?
 ¿La hostia, oh padres, en dónde está? . . .
 Del viejo cura las manos deja,
 y por el aire blanca se va! (p. 349)

With the desire for fulfillment so well established through the mood of the first section and the dramatic or visual image of the final stanzas, the emotion has been built to an intensity of feeling approaching desperation; yet the escape in the very last line of the desired object, the host, and with it of the desired fulfillment, ends the poem with a feeling of great longing, of deep human need left unsatisfied. The effective control of mood and image, leading from a general mood to a specific image, conveys expertly the emotion of the poem. This, then, the only religious poem of this period, expresses not so much a specific religious belief, or lack of it, but an intense longing for consummation of human need.

Aside from this example of specifically religious poetry, the work of this period can be roughly divided,

thematically, into three subdivisions. First, the love poetry, continuing the rather moody preoccupation with the inability to fulfill the need for love; the love poetry is probably the least interesting segment of the poems of this period. The second segment or subdivision is composed of dark, rather morbid poems concerning death and the passing away of life and youth. Much of this poetry is pessimistic but its dark melancholy is sometimes alleviated to a degree by a light touch in the form of mild satire and even occasional moments of playfulness. The last subdivision is the smallest and least well-defined. These are poems dealing with what might be called "lo inefable"; that is, the search for poetic reality, the undefinable ideal.

The love poems tend to be rather long and diffuse. A typical example is "Mirtos," (I, p. 271). Overly long and not at all original, the poem shows less inventiveness and genuine feeling than some of the more successful poems of the period, falling into over-emotionalism and repetitiveness; in the final analysis the poem is simply trite, although containing some lines of genuine beauty. It does illustrate a basic Nájera theme, the desire to fulfill the need for communication.

The poem is another first person monologue, in this case a rather plaintive plea by the speaker to a rather vague "tú," an idealized figure of a beloved whom he implores to accept him and thus fill his empty life. The contrast

between "yo" and "tú," the need to reach for something outside oneself, is established in the first stanza, which is the speaker's admonition to the beloved: "ven . . . surge . . . yo digo a tu espíritu: ¡despierta!" The idea of the mutual need to find security or fulfillment is expressed in the second stanza:

Yo soy el amoroso prometido
que viene a coronar tus ilusiones:
las aves buscan el caliente nido
y buscan el hogar los corazones. (p. 271)

The image in this stanza, of birds and hearts seeking a resting place, is a bit trite, but it does communicate the central feeling of search for relief, following the constant underlying Nájera theme of searching for a desired goal. The phrase "amoroso prometido" expresses especially well the feeling of desire or search, conveying the connotation of something sought after for a long period of time, of deep, continuous desire. Such a deeply imbedded desire is central to the basic feeling of Nájera's poetry.

The object of poetic desire or search in this poem is the figure of the beloved; she is, as in most love poetry, a vague, ill-defined figure, a feeling rather than a specific person or quality.³ The speaker expresses his quiet, understated, yet intense need to attain the lover and escape with her from the ordinary world:

Ninguno nos verá: sólo suaves,
escucharemos trémulos, bien mío,
el erótico canto de las aves
y la voz de las ondas en el río. (p. 271)

The desired goal in this poem is then not only the figure of the beloved, but the need to escape the ordinary world to a world of beauty and lyricism. The central image is "la voz de las ondas . . . ," expressing the mystery of the undefinable beauty to which he wants to escape.

The verse which is the heart of the poem is the sixth stanza:

Quiero que nuestras almas abrazadas
dejen la triste tierra del proscrito,
y crucen por un vértigo llevadas,
cual Paolo y Francesca, lo infinito. (p. 272)

The poem is then not a love poem in the usual sense; the search for "lo infinito" is the real preoccupation. The speaker is really searching for mutual fulfillment, for a soul with whom to escape from "la triste tierra." One might better call the poem an escape poem rather than a love poem. At any rate the need for escape into "lo infinito" is beginning to become the dominant theme of the poetry, expressed in many forms. The reference to Paolo and Francesca, lovers in Dante's Inferno who were destined to be blown about by an eternal whirlwind, heightens the sense of compelling desire.

The beloved here is seen as a dream, as a vague form only gradually taking shape. She is not an idealization or an embodiment of feminine beauty; she seems more to be a gradually growing idea; the emphasis is on the dreamlike quality: "y también te soñé cual me soñaste" (p. 272).

The idea of the beloved as embodiment of an emotion is continued in "así te soñé yo . . . con no sé qué luz que hierve y salta" This use of light in the image not only gives an impression of life, but also of a particular quality of elusiveness, of movement. This compares with other similar uses of light to express elusiveness and delicacy, as in, for example "Niña de ardientes ojos." The "no sé qué" of course expresses mystery, and the verbs "hervir y saltar" stress the feeling of movement.

The poem has at this point become much too long and verbose; it has not jelled around a central image, impression or idea as Nájera's best poems do. It emerges as basically just a stock love poem although the vague figure of the beloved conveys a connotation of more philosophical intent. The poem continues on and on in the same repetitious manner, with stock references to Juliet and Desdemona which are done in such a trite manner that they convey no particular feeling.

The next to last stanza is the most controlled, least overdone part of the poem. In it we find a quiet place where love is fulfilled:

Tú me amas, ven: el bosque está sombrío;
aquí hay secreto, libertad y calma,
en las hojas hay perlas de rocío
como perlas de amores en mi alma. (p. 274)

This describes, more than a love bower, a state of peace of mind. Peace of mind seems to be what the speaker is really

searching for when he speaks of "secreto, libertad, y calma." The references to "perlas . . . en mi alma" gives the impression of inner peace, purity and sincerity of emotion. "Mirtos," then, seems best read as a variation of the theme of search for ideal or poetic reality, put in this case in the form of a rather standard love poem.

Another work which could be placed under the general heading of love poems is "Del libro azul" (I, p. 285), although this poem departs farther from the usual love poetry to become more philosophical. The title is a clue to this change because "azul" has the standard meaning of poetic reality, superior to worldly reality. The theme of this poem is a secret which the speaker holds inside himself. The poem also obviously fits under the heading of poems of "lo inefable"; since the secret is connected to the image of a woman, it may also be included here. Like many of Nájera's poems, it is difficult to classify, since combines many of his basic themes.

The color blue represents poetry; the title of this poem, "Del libro azul," implies that it is about poetry. Poetry, love, woman, all combine as ingredients of the secret which is the theme. The first stanza, which also closes the poem as a refrain, introduces this idea:

Si mi secreto queréis que os diga,
 cerrad, si os place, vuestro balcón;
 temo que un silfo, mi buena amiga,
 en las alitas llevar consiga
 átomos de oro de mi pasión. (p. 285)

These lines obviously set the mood for a secret (cerrad . . . vuestro balcón) and hint at some interior and highly personal feeling about to be shared. The stanza also establishes a relationship between the speaker and the person spoken to, implying intimacy and personal communication. The reader is, of course, brought into this as well, although quietly.

The phrase "átomos de oro de mi pasión," conveys with its lyric beauty the poet's attitude toward his inner feeling or secret which is refined, purified emotion; the phrase suggests that the secret is precious and fragile, a purified gem to be closely guarded. Also, the word "átomos" implies something elusive and mysterious which escapes analysis. The secret then is passion, (. . . mi pasión), but of a certain type, not full blown and obvious but refined and pure, and mysterious.

Love is introduced in the next stanza: "¿Queréis que os hable de mis amores?" (I, p. 285). However it is the plural, the general concept or feeling and not a specific love. The idea of secretiveness, of eluding the world, is continued in the phrase: "odio las brisas por lo curiosas" (p. 285).

With the situation and mood set, the next stanza reveals the secret in more detail:

Ya veis, señora, si soy discreto,
si avaricioso guardo el secreto,
de luz, de aroma, de brisa y flor;
mi alma es sagrario y urna cerrada . . . (p. 285)

The qualities which are associated with the secret are "luz . . . aroma . . . brisa . . . flor." Nájera's basic technique of association of qualities to express interior feeling is employed here. The qualities are pleasant ones, implying beauty and fulfillment of the senses. All the senses are suggested: sight (luz, flor); smell (aroma); sound (brisa) and feeling (brisa). Fullness of experience or sensation is the basic quality of the secret. Connected with this is the image of his soul as "sagrario y urna cerrada"; the soul, or interior mind, is a sacred place, the repository of this secret of life. A touch of elegance and grace is given in the last line "en concha nácar, nido de amor."

A description of the secret as the image of a beautiful woman begins the next stanza:

Entre sus hojas, cual la violeta,
va con mi alma, dormida y quieta,
la casta imagen de esa mujer. (p. 286)

The basic impression of the secret has been expressed in general terms, leaving the impression of something delicate, beautiful, and perhaps unattainable; now these qualities are given more tangible form in the image of the "casta mujer", adding the element of purity to the beauty and elegance. The adjectives "dormida y quieta" also contribute to the impression of delicacy. With this stanza the whole image of the secret, in the form of a woman, has taken final shape. The poem has led from the general to the particular, from an essential feeling and impression to a more specific

image. The image never becomes really particularized, however, in any detail, and the poem ends with a sort of summary of what has come before:

Y cuando mi alma siente tristeza,
para ahuyentarla con su riqueza
va de puntillas al corazón. (p. 286)

The secret love embodied in the form of a beautiful woman is the source of life, or at least is that power which gives life its vitality.

The last stanza before the closing refrain is a purely lyric resumé of the whole impression. The figure is described in idealized lyric form, leaving an impression of pure beauty:

Contempla el oro de su cabello,
sus ojos claros, su terso cuello,
sus brazos blancos de rosa-te;
y porque no entra la luz curiosa,
mis ojos luego cierra medrosa,
pensando acaso que el sol nos ve. (p. 286)

The image of pure beauty is closed within him, his source of strength and consolation, his inner life. This of course is a general feeling; the exact meaning is not detailed, only suggested, resulting in stronger poetic force. The secret is then poetic truth or reality, all that is beautiful and genuinely meaningful. This secret poetic reality is clearly linked with Nájera's overall theme of the search for the ideal. The poem is then a variation on this basic theme, a sort of hybridization of the love poetry and the contemplative poetry. The lines of distinction blur throughout Nájera's work.

Another poem which may be classified with the love poetry is "Crepúsculo" (I, p. 287), basically a love song at sunset. Here, as in "Del libro azul," the romantic situation is not the only theme of the poem, but a structure around which the poem is built to express a more generalized emotion. The exact theme beyond the amatory situation is difficult to pinpoint; it is a feeling rather than an idea-- a feeling of wholeness of experience, of peace of mind connected with romantic love.

The evening setting is the basic component of this mood which conveys the feeling. Sunset is the most commonly used time of day for communicating the feeling of peace.⁴ The first stanza evokes the quiet of evening, the mood of a beach described with no apparent human occupant except the poet:

La tarde muere: sobre la playa
sus crespas olas la mar rompió;
deja que pronto de aquí me vaya,
que ya la tierra se obscureció. (p. 287)

A mood of contemplation, of muted intensity of feeling, is created with the first phrase ending in "muere." The breaking of the waves creates a sensation of loneliness, of a time for contemplation and meditation. A hint of uneasiness is in the air, however, in the last two lines, suggesting loneliness, a need for companionship. The meter also contributes to this effect; the regular, understated beat of the rhythm creates a quiet, peaceful feeling. The

rhythm and rhyme combine to bring the end of each line to a rhythmic stop, creating a short rest, as in music, at each line; this contributes to the gentle, almost rocking feeling of the verse. This feeling is continuous throughout the poem with the regular ABAB rhyme, giving the entire poem the same restful feeling.

The next two stanzas begin with exhortations to the person being addressed; the desire in each is for spiritual union. The first of these two stanzas creates a feeling of freedom from physical concerns: "Ven a mi lado; suelta los remos." The speaker expresses his desire for rest: "ven . . . reposa aquí."

The color blue is again used to express, or at least suggest, the poetic ideal which is aspired to:

. . . y los luceros brotar veremos
en ese manto de azul turquí. (p. 287)

Here, of course, the blue of evening is being described, but this description creates the feeling of something desired; taken together with his expressed desire for freedom and rest, it suggests the ideal love which the speaker desires to reach. The third stanza continues this feeling:

No temas nada; la mar se calma,
las olas duermen: aquí está Dios!
Ven, y juntemos alma con alma
para que juntas digan adiós. (p. 287)

In this stanza the speaker expresses explicitly his desire for spiritual union; restating the peace of the scene to reinforce the feeling of peace of mind, then stating the

desire for spiritual union. It is significant that the desire for union is linked with the desire to escape into an almost Nirvana-like union with the infinite, or God. It is this desire for escape into fusion with the infinite which underlies much of his most serious poetry, and which can be expressed in many ways, as desire for love, for poetic truth, for the ideal, for purity, and so on.

The next few stanzas are lyric descriptions of the night. It is described in visual images stressing the physical beauty of the scene: " . . . de joyas rica, / sus negros cofres abre al volar." The foam is described as "flotante falda." The feeling of almost metaphysical unity is continued: "todo se busca." Beauty and peace are once again connected with the need for love, for union:

. . . ya la tranquila noche comienza
y entre las sombras se puede amar. (p. 288)

With the eighth stanza the poem moves to a more personal level, from the generalized feeling to a more romantic, conventional love poem. "Crepúsculo" attains poetic unity better than "Mi casa blanca" and other poems which contain the germ of more than one theme or poem. Here the love or romantic theme is better fused with a larger, more philosophical feeling or idea. In "Mi casa blanca" the larger idea is the ideal represented by the house; here it is the desire for escape *into* the infinite. In "Crepúsculo," however, the romantic desire fits better; the figure or beloved he addresses is generalized enough to

represent a basic feeling. Our interest here is not at all on the figure of the beloved but on the interior feeling of the speaker which is linked with her and expressed in the amatory context.

The eighth stanza expresses his personal desire, not so much erotic as a need for communication and security:

Dame tus manos: quiero tenerlas,
para abrigarme con su calor:
cárcel de conchas tienen las perlas
cárcel de almas tiene el amor! (p. 288)

This is actually an extension of the feeling expressed in the first stanzas in his desire for fulfillment through union with something outside himself, here put into a more personal, immediate context. The emphasis is always on spiritual union, not physical. The figure of the beloved is really an idealized representation of love itself, the emotion personified: "Amor escondes en tu pupila, / como en los cielos se oculta Dios." (p. 288).

The next stanza is an interesting use of the sensation of opening, here used in the context of the overall idea of the individual opening himself up to experience something larger. The speaker addresses his beloved with this idea, expressed not in an erotic or physical sense but in a more philosophical sense, although it is expressed in visual, partly physical imagery:

Abre los ojos; no mires triste
como las olas van a morir;
se abre el abismo, como tú abriste
tu alma de virgen al porvenir. (p. 288)

The last line is the heart of the matter, as well as of the image: opening to the future, expectancy of larger experience. This is another variation on Nájera's basic theme expressed through imagery. The phrase "alma de virgen" stresses the spiritual nature of his concern. The word "porvenir" stresses the basic forward looking thrust of his concern, looking beyond himself.

The stanzas leading up to the final image are more conventional love poetry, the lyric love song which Nájera writes with skill to create a sort of fantasy world, or at least a hint of it, in the figure of the sea nymph among the coral. The scene is also a suggestion of the type of elegant beauty which infuses much Nájera poetry. It is also rather artificial:

Entre corales, nereida hermosa,
su rubia trenza torciendo está;
con verdes ojos nos ve envidiosa
y a flor del agua se asoma ya. (p. 289)

Such a studied scene forms a graceful and elegant picture of exactly the sort dear to the hearts of the modernista poets. The last two lines, advancing the romantic situation between speaker and beloved, form a light, graceful touch to an otherwise serious poem, and the playfulness does much to increase the lyric effect of the poem as well as to lighten the tone.

The closing stanzas return the poem to a more immediate level; the last is anecdotal in its reference to

the immediate situation. These last stanzas bring the poem back to immediate reality, leaving the body of the poem as an almost dreamlike impression. The dreamlike quality is that of a daydream, less removed from immediate reality than a nocturnal dream. The first of these closing two stanzas begins the process of returning to the immediate situation with its mention of the boat in which the two lovers have been riding on the water; the poem has suggested this immediate scene but has not insisted on it. The references to the boat throughout the poem could even be taken on a metaphorical level, as in stanza nine:

En esta débil barca que oscila
sobre el abismo vamos los dos; (p. 288)

The last references, however, are certainly on the ordinary, physical level; the philosophical musing which the scene has suggested are left behind and the poem closes as a love lyric:

Gimiendo el agua la barca mece;
la blanda brisa te arrullará,
mientras mi mano que se entumece,
entre tus bucles se esconderá.

Mira: mi remo las olas abre,
hacia la playa tuerzo el timón;
su negro seno la mar entreabre,
¡pero más negros tus ojos son! (p. 289)

The closing line, in fact, is a rather stock romantic observation by the speaker to his lover, closing the poem on a rather artificial note. On the whole, then, "Crepúsculo" may be described as a somewhat artificial love poem with suggestions of a more philosophical connotation. The setting

at sunset, with an accompanying stated desire to escape (" . . . deja que . . . de aquí me vaya), contains the germ of such philosophical poems as "Para entonces" which express the desire to escape the ordinary world and lose individual consciousness. The dream-like, idealized portrait of the girl, who seems to have no identity outside of the speaker's daydream, suggests the theme of search for the ideal, unattainable in the ordinary world. These twin themes of escape and search thus impart to a love poem which is on the surface rather conventional, suggestions of a deeper meaning.

Another lyric with love as its theme is "Al pie de un sicomoro" (I, p. 279), a short work which is strictly a love poem with no suggestion of any more philosophical preoccupation. In this pleasant, although pessimistic, poem, a lament for the unfaithfulness of lovers is the theme. It is quite pessimistic, offering none of the suggestion of fulfillment of "Crepúsculo."

The structure is one of the most inventive of any of the poems to date. Actually quite simple, the poem simply alternates short stanzas, with the lover's complaints interspersed between repeated lyric refrains. Each of the lover's complaints is a couplet of eleven and seven syllables with consonantal rhyme. The refrains are of eleven syllables each, each refrain repeated several times.

The first stanza introduces the situation, the lover sighing at the foot of a tree, a very traditional situation in poetry:

Al pie de un sicomoro la cuitada
suspira acongojada. (p. 279)

It should be noted that the lover in this case is feminine, a departure from the usual poems in which the speaker of the monologue takes the part of a first person masculine lover. The next stanza is simply the first of the repeated refrains: "Cantad el sauce y su verdor frondoso." The figure of the grieving lover is introduced in the next stanza:

La sien en la rodilla y con la mano
oprime el pecho insano. (p. 279)

This is of course the classic pose of the grieving lover, a bit melodramatic but effective in the stylized lyric description. The second of the repeated lyric refrains follows: "Cantad el sauce fúnebre y lloroso." The difference between the two refrains should be noted. In one the willow is "frondoso," a positive impression; in the second, it is "fúnebre y lloroso," a negative impression. Thus he alternates two refrains with basically different tones, one stressing the greenery and the other the funeral aspect of the willow, contrasting the beauty of the spot with the sad condition of the lover, intensifying the lyric effect and the emotion of the poem.

The lyric description of the place continues with the description of a fountain which seems to repeat the complaint of the lover:

La fuente iba a su lado rebullendo,
sus quejas repitiendo. (p. 279)

The scene with the fountain heightens the emotion and lyric effect incorporating the physical beauty of the place with the grief of the lover, merging both into one image, a technique which intensifies the effect. This stanza is followed by the refrain which stresses the "verdor frondoso" aspect of the willow. The next two stanzas follow in the same pattern, the complaint moving the hard ground to "compasión y duelo," followed by the funeral refrain.

At this point the poem moves to a more personal level with a first person complaint by the lady:

Le dije a mi amor que era inconstante.
¿Qué contestó mi amante? (p. 280)

This couplet is followed by the "verdor frondoso" refrain and the answer of the lover:

Si de otros ojos miro en el espejo,
¡busca tú otro cortejo! (p. 280)

The poem is thus the standard situation of disagreeing lovers, given its value by the lyric beauty in which it is set. The situation is reminiscent of Renaissance love lyrics, with the stylized lyricism and the regular, flowing verse.

The basic view of love which emerges in Najera's poetry is certainly pessimistic. Most of the love poems

show disillusionment of one degree or another as discussed by Gómez del Prado.⁵ A poem which fails as poetry but which is significant as a summary of this pessimistic attitude toward love is "Carta abierta" (I, p. 331); it is, as the title implies, an open letter, in monologue form, in which the speaker reveals a feeling of hopelessness. The poem is overly long, and repetitious, and the end result is a rather rambling discourse connected only by the central attitude toward love.

The poem does not justify a detailed analysis.

The fourth stanza summarizes the matter succinctly:

¡Amor! . . . Cada alborada que amanece
de nuestros sueños en la bruma vaga,
se derrama en los aires, crece, crece,
y cuando vamos a mirar se apaga. (p. 331)

This image captures perfectly the feeling of something escaping from our grasp. The dawn is delicate, fragile, short lived. The feeling is heightened by the phrase "sueños en la bruma vaga". Dreams, mist, all are part of an elusive, indefinable human experience; the underlying feeling is the impermanence of things, both interior and exterior. The dawn which "se derrama en los aires" is a perfect image of something beautiful which is growing, coming into being, growing into fullness. The emotion of love, then, is this same sort of experience, it grows and grows, ("crece, crece") but cannot reach true fulfillment and permanence: "... cuando vamos a mirar se apaga." This stanza is one of the

best images in Nájera's entire poetry from which to gain an understanding of his basic preoccupation: the imperfection and impermanence of human experience.

The seventh stanza of this poem contains a reference which is quite revealing of the essential state of mind revealed in Nájera's poetry:

¡Así es el hombre! Tántalo que tiene
la sed del ideal, la poesía . . . (p. 332)

The phrase "la sed del ideal" is a perfect description of the essence of Nájera's poetry; in fact, it could easily be used as a condensation of the basic state of mind of the poetry, the germ of feeling from which the poetry springs. The thirst for the ideal is immediately linked to poetry. This thirst, or desire, underlies all the variations on the basic theme, whether expressed as desire for the ideal, for love, for fullness of experience, for poetry, for religious fulfillment, for personal communication, and so on. The image of the lover (or poet) as a Tantalus taunted by desire for the ideal is an excellent summary of the outlook on life and view of the poet's role which underlies Nájera's poetry.

Another poem which largely fails as a poem but which illustrates a basic aspect of Nájera's poetry, that is, the emotionalism which mars much of his work, is "Hamlet a Ofelia" (I, p. 295). The emotion in this poem reaches the point of unbalance, or at least of uncontrolled emotionalism;

the result is a long, repetitious poem in the form of a monologue by Hamlet to Ofelia in which he displays his indecision and depression at being unable to reach a fulfilling relationship with her. The figure of Hamlet is appropriate to the preoccupation with human attempt to rise to fulfillment, but the poem is done so badly, so overly emotional, that it loses its effect.

There is really no cohesion of structure to the poem; it is a rather disconnected jumble of emotional statements by the poet; "voy a herirte"; "Estoy maldito! Mancho lo que toco"; estoy enfermo; pálido . . ." and so on. In fact, the poem reveals a strain of almost depressive tendencies which runs throughout Nájera's poetry:

Todo, todo en mi contra se concilia;
las iras todas de la tierra arrostro,
y revelan mis noches de vigilia
los pómulos salientes de mi rostro. (p. 296)

Such deep, uncontrolled emotion as this runs the risk of degeneration to the level of a persecution complex.

The morbid state of mind which predominates in some poems of this period is also very much present in this one:

La triste noche en que nací, caía
blanca la nieve sobre el pardo suelo,
aullaban los lobos, y cubría
su faz medrosa el enlutado cielo. (p. 296)

Even the use of the color white here does not have its usual connotation of purity and goodness, but is rather eerie and spectral, contributing to the ghastly feeling of the scene and the depressing state of mind. In fact the

contrast between the darkness of the earth and sky is here rather jarring and abrupt, suggesting the clash of emotions the poet feels.

There are numerous premonitions of ill fate at the moment of his birth: "aullaban los lobos;" "corneja mustia." These contribute to the atmosphere of fatalism which afflicts the speaker in this mood. He describes an air of indefinable gloom and foreboding which permeated the moment of his birth. This mood fits aptly many of the darker moments of his poetry, whether it was ordained by fate or by his own state of mind:

La alcoba estaba triste: toscos leños
quemábanse con áspero chasquido,
y la tropa impalpable de los sueños
revolando escapábase del nido. (p. 296-297)

The figure of Ofelia is in contrast to this gloom and sadness. After the speaker's tragic plight has been described for ten stanzas, he addresses her as his means of escape from it: "Tú . . . la paz de un lago en la conciencia tienes" She is to him a representative of something better, healthier, yet still elusive:

Sencillas flores en tu seno arrojas,
en tu frente tu espíritu medita,
y con la mano trémula, deshojas
el cáliz de una blanca margarita. (p. 297)

His feeling toward her is most ambivalent, just as his attitude is toward all that which represents the ideal. Hamlet cannot seem to make up his mind: "aquí se acecha y te emponzoña todo." (p. 298). He desires her and what she

represents, yet cannot feel himself adequate to attain it: "Yo no te puedo amar: en nada creo . . ." (p. 298). The crisis of belief and faith which is revealed throughout Nájera's poetry is very much present in this poem.

There is an effective image to express pessimism and depression used in stanza twenty-one:

Como cava el minero las montañas,
del alma a las cavernas he bajado;
y vi negras, tan negras sus entrañas,
que negra mi pobre alma se ha quedado. (p. 299)

This is an interesting variation of the association of qualities as a technique. Here it is extended and expanded not only to include qualities but also a mood, the atmosphere and feeling of the depth of a mine--dark, frightening. This mood or feeling is associated with the depth of his soul. The image thus works on a visual level, the interior of his soul like the interior of a mine, and on a more emotional, intangible level as well, evoking the mood and atmosphere of a state of mind.

The speaker's ambivalent attitude continues:

"Ofelia, huye, ¡huye! De mí mismo quisiera huir." He is left at the end of the poem with the same ambivalence:

Ofelia, Ofelia, es tiempo todavía;
no, mejor . . . ¡que se muera, que se muera! (p.300)

The poem thus closes with the ambivalent attitude toward love unresolved.

Thus the love poems, as a group, are principally the revelation of a state of mind, one which is dominated by a

feeling of conflict brought about by the desire to approach an ideal emotional state and the inevitable impossibility of it. The poems operate successfully as love poetry, with the figure of the beloved always a distant, unreachable figure to which the poet must aspire. Seen in this context, the poems are rather conventional works of late nineteenth-century Romanticism. They can also be taken as one mode of expression of the basic Nájera theme of thirst for the ideal.

The poems of the second group or subdivision of this period may be called philosophical or contemplative. Gómez del Prado, speaking of the philosophical tendency of Nájera's poetry, says: "Al madurar con los años, naturalmente, se tornará cada vez más filosófica, dentro de su estoicismo personal" ⁶ These poems reveal the author's rather depressing preoccupation with death, although many are lightened by a satiric touch. Some of these poems recall Edgar Allan Poe in their preoccupation with the death of a beautiful girl, but they are not as morbid and intensely emotional as such Poe masterpieces as "Annabel Lee." Still, it seems quite likely that Nájera was familiar with Poe and influenced in part by him. ⁷

The first of these poems is "Mimí" (I, p. 265), concerning the death of a beautiful girl by that name. The choice of the name "Mimí" marks the poem as typically modernista in its suggestion of elegance. The subject of

death is handled not in a grotesque or morbid fashion, but in a lighter manner; the poet paints a lyric scene with death as its subject. It is difficult to arrive at a conclusive interpretation of this poem. The very fact that he treats such a deeply emotional and serious subject as death in a rather playful manner gives to the poem a more serious feeling than would be apparent on a superficial reading. The light, stylized manner contributes to the poem's control over emotion by setting it in a distant, detached context which both paints a lyric scene and expresses deeper thoughts about death, a feeling with an edge of bitterness and disillusionment.

The principal characteristic which gives the poem its light, satiric touch is the rhythm, which is apparent from the first stanza:

Llenad la alcoba de flores
y solo dejadme aquí;
quiero llorar mis amores
que ya está muerta Mimí (p. 265)

The rhythm is quite pronounced and regular, calling immediate attention to the rise and fall of the language and the particular feeling it evokes. The pace of the rhythm is fast-moving with a clearly distinguishable beat, and with the movement of the words coming to rest on the end word in each line, rhyming ABAB. Fastpaced rise and fall of the language, together with the clearly accentuated rhyme, communicates a sensation of pleasure, of playfulness.

The feeling which results is not slow moving and ponderous, nor particularly dignified. It is not elegiac or solemn. It is, in fact, almost a dance rhythm, more suggestive of dancing about the maypole than of death. It is the incongruous mixture of light, playful tone and serious subject which in large part produces the satiric feeling.

With such a pattern of meter, one might expect a purely lyric poem, a song about the pleasures of living and loving, for example. The opening words also convey a suggestion of such a lyric. The opening statement "Llenad la alcoba de flores" prepares the reader more for a pastoral love lyric; the death scene is described more with the feeling of a love bower than a funeral chamber. This feeling is maintained through the first stanza until the last line, when the fact that she is dead is brought forward in a rather disconcertingly direct manner, seemingly as a part of the lyric love song. This introduction of death into the scene of course dampens the light aspect of the poem and makes the tone more solemn. Thus the tone of the poem as set by the first stanza is one of lyric lightness darkened by the presence of death. The overall effect is of subdued playfulness given an overlay of serious content. The first stanza leads up to this tone line by line; the first line introduces the lyric element, the second the introduction of the poet into the scene, the

third, the poet's state of mind (grief), and the last brings all of these elements into focus with the introduction of the dead girl.

The second stanza continues the same tone, describing the scene of the bier in the same fast-flowing language, continuing the same mixture of lyricism and rather morbid detail: "inmóvil y blanca está." There is an air of resignation in the poet's attitude which becomes the dominant feeling of the poem, mixed with the touch of satire and a touch of bitterness:

. . . parece como dormida,
pero no despertará. (p. 265)

The attitude of resignation continues in the succeeding stanzas in such exclamations as "En balde mi mano toca," and "en balde beso su boca," and "Dejadme: tal vez despierta"

There is an element of irony, as well as a feeling of wonderment at having encountered and captured a scene of such strange beauty in the lines:

. . . pero cerrad bien la puerta
por si se quiere escapar. (p. 265)

Obviously, the body of the girl is not going to escape, an irony which contributes to the incongruity of the situation which produces the edge of satire. More than this, however, the lines capture the speaker's feeling of tenderness, perhaps of awe, at the beauty of Mimí, his desire to hold onto such beauty and prevent his losing it.

There is an ambivalent feeling in the poet's emotion toward the situation; he is moved to desire, the desire to recapture the pleasures of love:

. . . ya volvió la primavera
vamos al campo, Mimi. (p. 266)

On the other hand, there is a sense of resignation at the knowledge and further communication with Mimi is impossible:

. . . está la mañana hermosa
y cerrado tu almacén. (p. 266)

These two conflicting emotions are balanced throughout the poem, conflicting with each other until they are resolved in the tone of resignation. The two emotions are nicely balanced in the eighth and ninth stanzas. In the eighth stanza the poet's emotional desire to revive the dead beloved reaches its peak:

¡Abre tus ojos, despierta!
¿No sabes que estoy aquí?
¡Verdad que tú no estás muerta?
¡Despierta, rubia Mimi! (p. 266)

Probably the most straightforward emotion in the poem comes in the third line of this stanza, with its rather plaintive note of hopelessness. This would seem to indicate that the poem is based on a genuine emotion, that the poet is not simply lightly amusing himself with the lyric mixture of sadness and beauty.

The conflicting emotion, resignation, is brought out in the ninth stanza:

Quiero en vano que responda;
ya nunca más la veré.
La pobre niñita blonda,
que me quiso, ya se fue. (p. 266)

This stanza is a return to the resignation expressed earlier in such phrases as "en balde." This feeling is continued in the phrase "en vano." The phrase "que responda," referring to Mimí, expresses the impossibility of communication. The desire for communication with someone or something outside oneself is one of the basic themes of Najera, as discussed in the love poetry of this period. Resignation is strongest in the phrases "nunca más la veré," and "ya se fue." The juxtaposition, in the last line of the two phrases "que me quiso," and "ya se fue" condenses the situation into one line incorporating the joys of the past and the hopelessness of the future. The past was the only moment of pleasure but the moment has passed. With the verb "quiso" in the preterite tense, a definite break has been made--love is past, dead like the girl. The passing of love is of course the reason for his sadness and is also a variation of the basic theme of unattained fulfillment. The last phrase of the sentence is the final seal of unattainability; the reflexive preterite of "ir" puts love and the "pobre niña" once and for all out of the poet's grasp.

The next stanza incorporates a visual image which brings both the emotion of the poet and the immediate situation of the poem to rest, with an air of final resignation:

En sus manos, hoy tan quietas,
dejo ya mi juventud,
y con azules violetas
cubro su blanco ataúd. (p. 266)

A visual image is constructed, that of the girl in her coffin, and on it is imposed the image of leaving youth on the coffin as one leaves flowers at a graveside. This imagined action, linked with the action of covering the coffin with violets, imparts immediacy and intensity to the poet's feeling of loss; what is lost is not just a girl friend or a lover, but youth itself, and, it is implied, life itself. The poet associates a tangible action with an intangible, imaginary one, and thus mingles and associates the attitudes and emotions common to both. The images operate on a visual, immediate level and on an interior, suggestive level. The technique is an association and blending of a range of emotions and sensations which are given form in a visual image and then given deeper suggestions in the imagined action which is associated with the visual form.

The final stanza is less serious than these, and returns to the poem the lighter, rather playful mood with which it began:

Si alegre, gallarda y bella
la veis pasar por allí,
no os imaginéis que es ella . . .
¡Ya está bien muerta Mimí! (p. 267)

The adjectives in the first line are all positive, happy words associated with life and the beauty death has taken away. The introduction of them at this point in the poem returns the lyric, happy mood, or suggests it at any rate. The fact that these adjectives are associated with the past, with a girl now dead, brings the irony of the poem full

circle --the irony, that is, of mixing light tone and form with a rather morbid subject. The final tone which is the result might best be termed bittersweet, a mixture of grief and happy memories tempered by resignation to loss. The bittersweet feeling is most evident in the final stanza ("Si . . . la veis pasar por allí"), in which he states an obvious impossibility. She is dead, as had been described in detail, and is not going to return. The irony of this statement approaches bitterness, but is tempered by the lightness of the rhythm and the lyric quality of the meter and the description of the situation. The songful, dancelike meter continues throughout the poem, never varying or losing its effect. In the final stanza the meter serves to close the poem on the bittersweet note, especially in the last line of the poem, "Ya está bien muerta Mimí!." The key phrase is "bien muerta," combining the finality of the situation with an unnecessary stress on this finality; death is final itself and needs no qualification. This unnecessary stress adds to the ironic, slightly bitter tone and ends the poem on a rather ambivalent note, ambivalent in the sense of conflicting emotions within the poet. The final impression of the poem is one of a rather depressing preoccupation with death lightened by an ironic and almost detached attitude which prevents the subject from becoming morbid.

Not all of the poems treating of death have the same lightness of tone or bittersweet attitude as "Mimí." One of these is "Lápida," also dating from 1880, the same

year as "Mimí," probably proceeding from the same state of mind or preoccupation with death which prompted "Mimí." This poem is, however, quite different in tone from the other. The title itself sets the essential tone of deadly seriousness. The use of the word "lápida" for the title is not ironic or ambivalent; it is a straightforward statement of the serious concern of the poem.

The tone as suggested by the title is developed fully in the first stanza:

Mucho silencio bajo los pinos
la luz apenas se atreve a entrar
en esa calle de verdes tuyas
donde se enreda la obscuridad. (I, p. 269)

The words "silencio" and "obscuridad" are the key to the tone of calm quietness. The darkness lends a feeling of foreboding. The establishment of the tone is accomplished through a mixture of visual imagery and suggestive adjectives; the visual image not only sets the situation of the poem but also suggests the interior feeling the poet desires to establish. Thus a total effect is created, fusing a visual image, suggestive vocabulary, and interior emotion. The image not only suggests the interior emotion fundamental to the poem, but is a part of it.

The image is of a road darkened and silenced by a heavy overgrowth of trees. This is a particularly apt image to create an atmosphere of contemplative awareness; the outside world is shut out ("la luz apenas se atreve a entrar") and the spot becomes a type of cosmos, enclosed

within itself, inviting introspection. The verb "se enreda" applied to darkness intensifies the feeling of darkness and contributes significantly to the total effect. The opening sentence begins the feeling with the word "silencio," and sets the scene, "bajo los pinos." The ~~second~~ line introduces the element of darkness and isolation; the third line further establishes the scene already set. The final line brings the feeling suggested to a final form, intensifying it in the word "se enreda," and bringing the stanza to an end on the suggestive single word "obscuridad," which describes the physical scene and suggests the atmosphere and the state of mind the poet wishes to establish.

The meter also contributes to the total effect, and should be noted. This is not the light, fast dance-like movement of language we saw in "Mimí"; it is quite the opposite. The lines are longer, ten syllables each instead of the eight syllable lines of "Mimí." More important than the ~~length~~ of lines is the rhythm. It is slower, more even, more regular, without the pronounced rise and fall of the rhythm of "Mimí." The result is not at all a fast, playful, dance-like rhythm, but a slow moving, serious regular line more approximating a processional rhythm. Compare the opening line of "Mimí" ("Llenad la alcoba de flores . . .") with the opening line of "Lápida" ("Mucho silencio bajo los pinos . . ."). Besides the obvious difference in the meaning of the words

and the situation, there is a significant difference in rhythm which does much to explain the varying effects of the poems. It is possible that a person who does not understand the Spanish language, on hearing the two poems read aloud, could detect the basic difference in tone from the rhythm alone. The fast, seemingly spontaneous outburst of "Llenad . . ." with its dance like rhythm (felt and experienced if not immediately recognized as such) is in clear contrast to the slow-moving, stately, processional rhythm of "Mucho silencio bajo los pinos" The beat of the rhythm of "Llenad . . ." rises and falls sharply in an almost sing-song effect; the language of "Mucho silencio . . ." flows evenly along to the end of the line like a slow-moving stream.

With this atmosphere set so well in the first stanza, the poem moves effortlessly into its main development. The following stanza gets down to the specifics of the situation, setting the scene explicitly in a cemetery:

¡Cuántos amigos en los sepulcros
de blanco mármol o piedra gris! (p. 269)

There is no suggestion of lightness or playfulness in this statement; it is a statement of undiluted, although restrained, melancholy. The emotion expressed here is very genuine sadness. It is not sadness directed at the death of one person, certainly not the death of a love interest. The emotion is thus less intense than "Mimí,"

more of a generalized, philosophical musing on a universal human experience. The mood is meditative, contemplative.

The isolation of the scene, the separation of it from everyday life, in the physical situation of the setting, as well as on a more philosophical level, is stressed in the third stanza:

Abajo, siembras, techos y torres;
el panorama de la ciudad,
el terso lago que duerme inmóvil,
la caravana que lenta va. (p. 269)

The separation of the two scenes is brought out in several ways. First of course in the physical separation of the cemetery from the city--" . . . el panorama de la ciudad"--apparently the cemetery is on a hill above the city. Being on a hill above a city produces the feeling of being above the everyday cares of life, above the humdrum world, stimulating a meditative mood. All of the material components of everyday life merge into a single scene: " . . . siembras, techos y torres . . . ". The feeling of separation is summed up in the last line. The caravan may be an actual slow-moving group of some sort, perhaps the funeral procession; however, the image also works on a more philosophical level, implying the caravan of life which passes before the poet's eyes.

The next stanza brings the poem back to the immediate concern, the funeral. The cemetery and the indifferent caretaker are described:

Y en este cerro desnudo y triste,
 el alta reja, la ferrea cruz,
 y un jardinero que indiferente
 mira el cortejo del ataúd. (p. 269)

The cemetery begins to take on a more specific character and feeling, "desnudo y triste." It is a very negative feeling, one contributing to the melancholy. The indifference of the caretaker also contributes to the poet's feeling of loneliness and melancholy. The cemetery is described in terms of metal ("reja, férrea"); this adds to the feeling of desolation and adds to the basic feeling of the poem; the hard, cold, unyielding quality of metal is much the same quality as death itself.

The next stanza marks the halfway point in the poem, and there is a shift of emphasis from the generalized, contemplative first half to a more particularized second half. Particularized, that is, in the detail of the immediate situation around which the poem is constructed; the overall mood remains the same. The fifth stanza moves to a more immediate level in its description of the scene at the grave:

Y hemos llegado: ya abren la fosa,
 suenan los golpes del azadón,
 y el sacerdote, breviario en mano,
 reza las preces a media voz. (p. 270)

The sound of the grave being opened imparts to the scene a feeling of intense immediacy; incorporating the sound of the shovel into the image brings into play the sense of hearing as well as of sight and heightens the sensation. At this

point in its development the poem has arrived at its fullest meaning; the general mood and tone have been set, and now the poet has introduced a more immediate feeling. The particularized, immediate situation has grown naturally out of the mood and is set within the context of that mood. The result is a situation which operates on several moods and levels at once: the general, more universal and the personal and more interior. The next stanza moves to an even more personal level:

Y cada uno se dice triste:
¿cuándo en su seno reposaré? (p. 270)

This question is not asked by any identified individual in the poem, nor by the speaker. It is a personalized reaction by "Los circunstantes, formando grupos . . . ," a personal reaction to a very universal situation. The reader of the poem is thus brought into the feeling of the poem in a very subtle fashion, for he, too, will most likely ask himself the question, although perhaps subconsciously. The emotional impact of the poem is certainly increased. The next stanza continues this general vein, the participants go about the cemetery reading the inscriptions. The person being buried has not been identified, the poem has been kept on a more general level; now the person is identified: " . . . la que llevan a sepultar." The poem is thus brought to a still more particular situation.

The next two stanzas are repetitious and could be left out with no harm to the poem; they simply reiterate what has gone before: "Cuántos semblantes que nada dicen . . ." and so on. There is an intensification of the feeling of the immediate situation and the sensations felt by the poet in the line: " . . . corren las horas y quema el sol!" The melancholy of the time is intensified by the dragging time and the heat. This feeling adds nothing new to the poem, but does condense much of the misery of the occasion into one line which reinforces it before the final stanza and final image. The last two stanzas stress the generalized, then the particular aspects of the situation. The next to last stanza recapitulates the attitudes of the group of people: "Unos se burlan . . ."; " . . . otro contempla con ansiedad." This stanza also reiterates and reinforces the general sadness and pessimism of the poem by restating the basic preoccupation with death:

. . . la tierra oscura, la blanca tumba
donde sus padres durmiendo están. (p. 270)

The last stanza brings the poem to a close with a rather vivid image of the body, or rather of the coffin, ready for the final moment. The poem is given a final thrust of intensity by the last line, which is addressed to the dead girl herself:

Sobre la arena recién regada
descansa inmóvil el ataúd . . .
y en esa caja negra y angosta,
ya para siempre reposas tú! (p. 270)

These lines end the poem on a personal, rather intense feeling. The final emotion has been built up to with a slowly developing intensity, moving from general to particular. The end result is a poem which operates on both levels at once, leading to a more intense feeling about death than would be gained in a poem dealing with only one aspect or the other. The poet's control of emotion and language has served him well in this poem.

The preoccupation with death so evident in this period of poems is not really so much a morbid concern with physical death as it is a desire to be free of earthly, imperfect life and find a higher, more ideal life. This desire is expressed in the last stanza of the poem "Madre naturaleza" (I, p. 311):

Acude, madre, y antes que perezca
y bajo el peso del dolor sucumba;
o abre tus senos, y que el musgo crezca
sobre la humilde tierra de mi tumba. (p. 312)

Here death is not seen in relation to the gory details of physical death, but as a relief from what is called "la terrible lucha por la vida" (p. 312). Death is really the breasts of mother nature. In such poems as "Mimí" and "Lápida," death is separation from the imperfect worldly life of which, in these two poems, the poet sees himself a part. In "Madre naturaleza" is expressed the desire to be separated from imperfect existence. Seen in this larger perspective, death is the ultimate way to the ideal,

to the higher reality for which he constantly searches. Gómez del Prado properly classifies Nájera's attitude toward death as a desire for escape from earthly suffering: "El deseo de erradicarse es una extensión de su desesperanza; mientras más pronto venga la muerte, menos tiempo tendrá que sufrir."⁸

These poems dealing with death in such a detached, contemplative manner reveal an aspect of Nájera's poetry which is of growing importance in this stage of development: that is the combination of emotional intensity and emotional control. Such emotions kept under firm control enable the attainment of a more objective, universal scope in the poetry, deepening and enriching the poetic experience to include more than a personal viewpoint. The emotion of these poems is elevated to a less personal, more universal level than the earlier poems.

The third and last subdivision of this period of poems is difficult to classify. All of Nájera's poetry deals in one way or another with a search for higher experience of life, for an ideal which encompasses escape from physical reality and attains a spiritual reality undefinable in ordinary, everyday terms. This search for the ideal may be termed, in one manifestation, the concern with "lo inefable": that is, an attempt through poetry to express feelings and ideas about the desire to attain or understand this undefinable, spiritual ideal. Connected with this is

the problem of "lo efímero," that is the poet's sense of fleeting time, of life which is escaping from him, passing away while the desired ideal remains elusive. Some poems express these concerns in more explicit terms than others, and such poems may be termed poems treating the theme of "lo inefable." This type of poem becomes more and more common with the mature period, and many of the best poems of the mature period deal with some variation on this theme. From the middle period, there are several. None attain the perfection of the most mature works, but some are nonetheless fine poems.

The longest of these poems is "¿Para qué?", (I, p. 291) a very bad poem in which the speaker displays profound exhaustion with life and a desire for release. The basic emotion is discouragement, expressing a desire to find some destiny and a discouragement about the possibility. It is, like all of his unsuccessful poems, long, verbose and repetitious. The poem is valuable, however, as a source of understanding of the state of mind prevalent in the poetry of this type.

The title itself expresses the basic feeling of the poem. The question form raises an inquiry or problem, but leaves the reader with the matter unresolved and the reader's sensibility aroused and put into a doubting frame of mind. The question itself conveys the feeling of hopelessness, of resignation. More specifically, the

question asks for an explanation, for some reason, but does not specify exactly what it is that is sought, leaving a generalized impression of anxiety and uneasiness.

The first stanza actually sums up the entire poem fairly well:

Mi cuerpo soñoliento se rinde a la fatiga;
secreta voz interna me dice que no siga . . .
¡Dejadme sobre el césped exánime dormir!
Dejadme: idos vosotros en pos de la ventura;
de niño, me inspiraba pavor la sala oscura;
hoy, hombre, me da miedo mirar el porvenir. (p.291)

The first line is really the heart of the matter. The vocabulary expresses great fatigue: "soñoliento, se rinde, fatiga." The word "cuerpo" intensifies this feeling by putting the stress on the most basic physical sensation, especially the coupling of the noun "cuerpo" and the verb "se rinde"; the feeling is of very intense weakness leading to collapse, expressed in a very physical sense, but suggesting also a deeper spiritual malaise. As usual the meter contributes to the total effect, although not with the precision of the best poems. The lines are long, of uniform length. The rhythm is slow paced, even and regular, the rise and fall of the language is unobtrusive. The effect of this even, slow moving language is to slow the reader's pace, to draw out his absorption of the lines and create something of the effect of the poet's feeling of weariness. There is a caesura in the middle of each line, or at least the suggestion of one, further slowing the pace

and fixing the reader's attention on each segment of the poet's statements. The muted, slow language contributes to the feeling of resignation which permeates the poem and is the essential tone of it. This tone of resignation predates many of the later mature poems, those with an elegiac style and feeling; in this sense this poem may be said to be a forerunner to the masterpieces of the mature period.

This poem, however, does not have the intensity and precision of feeling and language which characterize the best poems; the control over emotion and personal involvement which allow the attainment of this control are not present in this particular poem. It simply states and restates the same feeling, in the same style and language. There is no central image or impression to act as the spark of inspiration and unite the poem into an aesthetic whole, as happens in such later masterpieces as "Pax Animae," for example.

The basic image is that of the speaker riding in a ship anxious to arrive at some destination, but the image is spread too diffusely through the poem; one does not really realize that the image is there until the third stanza, which begins with the all too obvious statement "Oh, nave de la vida." The poet is, in effect, notifying the reader that the image has been arrived at; such lack of subtlety does not act to produce the instantaneous spark of emotional reaction in the reader which is necessary for an

image to work to best effect. (This is not to say that an image must be immediately understood or analyzed to be effective, but it must communicate directly on an intuitive level). At any rate this image is stretched too thin to be effective.

The poem is replete with such references to the central idea as "¿Adónde navegamos?" and "La góndola . . . arrogante," carried a bit too far in the eighth stanza:

¡No veis bajo las olas profundas que se entreabren
mil dientes que relucen, mil bocas que se abren?
El tiburón hambriento y el rápido delfín
esperan. Vais cantando. Sois jóvenes. ¿Qué importa?
La espera será larga, la espera será corta,
¡la mar es el camino! ¡Su estómago es el fin! (. 293)

This image is not on the usual high level of Nájera's work. It is too obvious, too forced, to communicate the intensity which the emotion of ultimate destiny implies. The next stanza contains a short image which is more effective than any other segment of the poem:

Dejemos que nos marquen los vientos el camino,
que a su capricho empujen las olas el bajel . . . (p. 293)

These two lines sum up what has been said for eight stanzas. The central ingredient is the wind, or rather the feeling of the strength of the wind as an impelling force. The physical property of wind is extended in the image to an impelling nonphysical impulse, destiny, which drives us as the wind drives a ship. Thus the poetry acts simultaneously on exterior levels, fusing a physical sensation with a non-physical one to create a total impression in the mind of the reader.

The poem ends with a restatement of the poet's resignation: "Quiero salirme . . . no puedo y me resigno" The poem is, except for the image discussed above, too obvious a statement of feeling; it is sort of a catalogue or list of statements with no central unity. A sense of questing after "lo inefable," or the poetic search for undefinable reality or destiny, underlies the poem.

The best poems of the third subdivision of the theme of "lo inefable" or "lo efímero" are three poems entitled, appropriately enough, "Efímeras." Of these three poems the first (I, p. 313) is probably the best, or at least the most representative. All of Nájera's poetry deals in one sense or another with the very broad ideal of the search for "lo efímero," but these poems are more explicit in their themes. The basic feeling underlying all of the poems is the sense of the impermanence of life, of vitality which is eluding the poet's grasp.

The poem is built around a series of sensory qualities which express the feeling of transitory experience which bursts into life for an instant and then disappears. This technique employs the association of qualities, associating the qualities of phenomena which stimulate one or more of the five senses. The quality most basic to each phenomenon is transience. The three phenomena are music (sound); perfume (smell); and the sun (vision). The poem is constructed around a series of rhetorical questions about

these things, then a series of answers, then two closing stanzas of philosophical comment by the speaker.

Each of the ten short stanzas is a sort of ephemeral object in itself; that is, each is a self-contained unit following a set pattern. The ephemeral quality is suggested within each stanza by the direct expression of a single thought which is brought into instant completeness by the question that is posed immediately and directly in the first line of each stanza. With this technique of bringing into full expression a thought concerning the transience of several things, commenting briefly on each one, then passing immediately on the next thought, the structure of the poem reproduces the effect of a series of entities or thoughts brought to life for an instant then passing away. The structure of the poem is thus itself a series of bursts of thought and sensations brought into being through images. The effect is of a string of bursts of energy, each separate unto itself, yet connected in the larger context with each other, just as the qualities under consideration.

The first stanza concerns sound:

¿Adónde van los sonidos/
cuando muere en los oídos
la prostrera vibración?
El aire es mar: en él bogan
y se hunden y se ahogan
en la móvil extensión. (p. 313)

The key word is "vibración"; a sensation which vibrates, takes on life for an instant, then fades. Sounds are

constantly present in the make up of things, yet individual sounds take individual life only on specific occasions, and then only for an instant before fading back into the air. The next stanza asks the same about the sensation of smell (perfume):

¿Adónde vuela el perfume?
 . . . se disipia y se va . . .
 el aire su esencia sorbe
 y muerto el perfume está. (p. 313)

The process is the same: an entity is given individual life for an instant, then is absorbed back into the essential overall scheme. The third stanza takes up the question of the sun in the same manner:

¿Adónde su disco encierra
 el rojo sol . . .
 ¿y adónde, tristes y bellas,
 van las palidas estrellas . . . (p. 313-314)

With the fourth stanza begins a series of answers to each question, the essence being that these phenomena live not as individual things but as essential qualities which are always present in the scheme of life, only to be called forth occasionally:

. . . efímeras vibraciones
 luces, perfumes y sonos
 van al mismo panteón. (p. 314)

The answer is that each can be summoned to life, or returned to life as a part of the system of the universe.

Pero la música blanda
 revive, palpita y anda . . .
 si queréis verla despierta,
 tocad, artistas, tocad! (p. 314)

El perfume no se agota . . . (p. 314)

Hay bajo el gran oceano
un palacio soberano
que habita de noche el sol; (p. 314)

. . . descansa la estrella fría
de un monte nevado al pie. (p. 315)

The philosophy of the poem is summed up with the phrase, "Toda muerte es aparente . . ." (p. 315). There is a note of optimism in this aspect of the poem. The optimism is directed at the universe as a whole; life, in some form, will continue. Thus personal pessimism is tempered with a philosophical, almost metaphysical optimism. A rather pantheistic view of the world emerges; the life we know is only a brief spark of energy which in individualized form for an instant then returns to the universal matter. Gómez del Prado seems to miss this aspect of Nájera's world view, imputing to him at one point the desire for immortality of some sort: " . . . no será, no, por haber aceptado lo inevitable, sino más bien por hacerse creer que sus obras le darán vida eterna" ⁹ There does not appear to be any desire in this poetry for individual immortality, rather a desire to overcome the need for it and find fulfillment in a universal scheme of things.

This poem, however, ends on a note of personal pessimism:

Pero, ¿en qué limbo sepulto . . .
mientras que dure el olvido,
vive, señora, mi amor? (p. 315)

With this poem in mind, the underlying attitude of Nájera's poetry becomes more clear, and the mixture of pessimism and optimism fits into a larger context. Almost a pantheistic view of the world underlies the poetry. All of life is a unity, all life is a part of an overall scheme, and life will thus continue no matter what the fate of individual objects. Yet the poet is most pessimistic about his own individual chances of fulfillment. He seems to view himself as a rather unfortunate spark of life amid the myriad sparks of life that make up the universe. His own individual fate leads him to frustration and unhappiness, yet it is not all that bad because life, in its many forms, will continue no matter what his individual fate.

The poems of this period, then, revolve around a conflict between faith and doubt, ranging from the conflict in religious faith of "De las neuróticas" to the near pantheism of "Efímeras." The central theme is a poetic search for an ideal or higher reality, a search which is expressed in varying forms ranging from religious conflict through the love poems to the openly philosophical or contemplative poems.

CHAPTER III

POEMS OF CRISIS 1886-1887

The conflict between faith and doubt discussed in such poems as "De las neuróticas" develops away from a crisis of religious faith and broadens throughout Nájera's work into a spiritual crisis of greater scope. The search for the ideal which is the essential preoccupation of Nájera's poetry is seen in embryonic form in the early religious poetry as well as in the idealized feminine figure of much of the love poetry. This essential preoccupation becomes the basic theme of the poetry and could best be characterized as a preoccupation with the poetic search for a spiritual ideal which transcends the reality of the everyday world. This theme is expressed in the poetry through a feeling of disillusionment with human inadequacies which prevent our attaining the ideal and an identification of poetry with that ideal.

One of the most typical poems of the period is "Musa blanca" (II, p. 59), a dialogue between a first person speaker referred to as "the poet" and a feminine figure of the Muse who identifies herself as "la Poesía." For the first time in Nájera's work, poetry is linked specifically with greater consciousness, deep spiritual experience which penetrates beyond the ordinary experience of life. Gómez

del Prado treats the poem as basically a love poem,¹ but it is better understood if read as one expression of the poetic search. The muse is identified with the color white, symbolizing purity, suggesting a connection of poetry with spiritual purity.

The opening conveys an impression of the speaker's state of mind, which is, in a word, depressed. The dominant feeling of sadness is created by means of a description of night which is expanded into a description of the scene in which the dialogue takes place. As usual, the rhythm is integrated into the whole effect. Lines of fourteen syllables divided by caesura, or suggestion of caesura, with slow-paced, even, regular beat, lend a quiet feeling with a suggestion of restfulness. There is a suggestion of fatigue in the rigidly regular, repeating phrases. It is not an energetic or lively rhythm, but a quiet, contemplative one.

The opening lines describe a dark, disquieting night scene:

Obscura está la noche; desierta la pradera
 los cierzos invernales azotan mi vidriera;
 el chorro de la fuente no salta, helado ya;
 el encinar se agita cual mar de negras olas . . .
 y, en el sillón de cuero, con mi dolor a solas,
 del humo sigo atento la espira que se va. (II, p. 59)

The word choice, together with the rhythm, establishes the tone. Such melancholy vocabulary as "obscura" modifying "noche" and "desierta" modifying "pradera" expresses

essential moody, sad feeling. "Obscura . . . noche" is a bit redundant--night is obviously dark--but the darkness is more than just the absence of the sun. It suggests a frame of mind as well, a darkness of mood. Visual images also contribute to the same feeling. The frozen fountain and the "encinar . . . cual mar de negras olas" convey a feeling of desolation and loneliness. The fountain especially is an image of life used up, suggesting death. Various sensory responses are employed, in Nájera's usual fashion--sound: "cierzos . . . azotan"; feeling and sight: "chorro helado"; and sight: "el encinar se agita" In the last two lines the speaker situates himself within this context of melancholy. The phrase "con mi dolor a solas . . ." intensifies the loneliness which has been conveyed in the opening and makes it a very personalized feeling within the poet. With this line, the poem moves to an interior level which is maintained throughout. The "sillón de cuero" and the fire suggest a materially comfortable study or library which contrasts with the uneasy state of the poet's mind, implying that such material comfort does not produce the peace of mind sought by the speaker.

The speaker's agitation continues into the following stanza; he is unable to find satisfaction in his intellectual pursuits:

Mis libros predilectos aguardan en la mesa;
mas de tristeza y tedio el alma siento opresa
y ni sonoros versos ni prosa he de leer. (II, p. 59)

The real need is for love, an emotional and physical need not filled by intellect. No man is happy without having "entre sus brazos amantes la mujer." A need for emotional fulfillment is emerging as the real cause of his agitation and melancholy.

The poem is narrated in the first person singular. A reference to the night before gives the reason for the speaker's present loneliness, a lover who proved unfaithful. The pain is fresh, for just the night before " . . . juntos nuestros cuerpos, hablabamos de amor." (p. 59). Loneliness is expressed in a visual image:

. . . Sólo de la ingrata como recuerdo queda
el abanico roto junto al miten de seda,
y en el sofá las rosas sin vida ni color. (p. 60)

The artifacts of elegant middle class courtship are left behind. The speaker's bitterness comes through in the word "recuerdo"; what should be souvenirs of happy love are only ruins. Again the precise choice of nouns and adjectives conveys the poem's meaning. The vocabulary in this case stresses a sense of exhausted life, the present drained of meaning by the unfortunate past. The phrases "abanico roto" and "rosas sin vida ni color" express physical devastation, the ravages of time; the feeling carries over to a less physical level and expresses as well the entire mood of the speaker at the moment.

Several more images follow, connected with the present sad state of the speaker:

Como enlutado esposo, mi espíritu sombrío
se oculta de los hombres; mi corazón vacío
está como la cuna del niño que murió. (II, p. 60)

The words "enlutado" and "sombrio" establish the feeling which the image conveys. The visual image of a man in mourning is transferred to his spirit, transforming the spirit into a representation of his entire condition. The phrase "se oculta de los hombres" expresses the desire to escape from the world, in this case to escape into oneself. A rather morbid feeling permeates the image of the cradle. Again, a feeling is transferred from a physical object to an interior state of mind, associating emotions rather than qualities. The words which establish the feeling of the image are "vacío" and "murió"; the feeling of emptiness and death permeates both the cradle and his heart.

There is a strain of bitterness in the fifth stanza, which compares a man digging a grave for his wife, whom he has just murdered, to the poet's own desire to bury his love:

Mi amor estrangulado, yo mismo y sin testigos
en el jardín pequeño llorando enterraré. (II, p. 60)

The image of his burying his love in a grave is more direct than the lines above; he does not transfer emotions from exterior to interior, but connects both in a single visual scene which very directly expresses the desired feeling. The essential word here is "estrangulado," conveying struggle and death, but applied to an emotion rather than to physical life. Thus the negative feeling of the word is intensified by being applied to love, the self-destructive state of mind.

Another word association begins the next stanza:

"son castos mis dolores" The association of purity with grief implies an almost masochistic pleasure in suffering, the idea that one rises above one's worldly state through pain. The basic idea in the poem is that sadness purifies emotions and raises them to a higher level than ordinary reality; the purified emotions are transformed into poetry. This association of "casto . . . dolor" is the introduction of this idea into the poem, developed later in the dialogue between poet and muse. Sadness is addressed in personified form: " . . . a solas y callados quedémonos tú y yo." There is in this exclamation an obvious security in grief, resignation to the inevitable. It seems as if the speaker were slipping with relief into resignation. The grief takes the place of companionship and almost seems to fill an empty life.

The statement to personified grief is followed immediately in the same stanza with the first suggestion of the presence of the muse: "¿qué sombras ven mis ojos?" The figure takes form slowly, lending an air of mystery and suspense to her, and, by extension, to poetry itself. The last three stanzas of this section of the poem are a gradually developed description, or impression, of the muse, especially the ninth stanza:

Sobre sus blancos senos, erguidos y redondos,
cae una trenza rica de sus cabellos blondos
cuya delgada punta le llega casi al pie;

sandalias marfilinas son cárcel de su planta;
sin flores el cabello, sin perlas la garganta,
vestida de sí misma, mi espíritu la ve! (p. 61)

The figure is described as chaste and pure, with adjectives implying whiteness and lightness: "blancos, blondos, marfilinas." She is described in the manner of a classical Greek statue:

Y atónito contemplo, soberbia, esplendorosa,
de blanco revestida, la estatua más hermosa
con que soñado hubiera pagana antigüedad. (p. 61)

The impression the muse gives is of strength, purity and calmness, a perfect antidote to his state of melancholy agitation. The statue is "revestida de sí misma," naked in the Garden of Eden sense of pure, innocent and undefiled. She is natural, a representative of the natural state of man, the ideal state of perfection which the poet seeks, in other words.

The first ten stanzas have set the mood and evoked the figure of the muse; the last thirteen are the dialogue between poet and poetry. The muse's opening statement to the poet calls him to renewal and rejuvenation of mind and spirit:

¡Despierta ya, poeta! Despierta, soy la ausente,
muy pronto los cristales helados de la fuente
en la marmórea taza cantando bullirán;
veremos nuevas rosas cubriendo la pradera,
y atravesando lentos el amplia carretera,
cargados ya de mieses, los carros crujirán. (p. 61)

The images are extensions of the first section, or the same images used to indicate renewal; this is done by inverting

the mechanism of the images to express the opposite quality from what they represent in their original form. The frozen fountain will flow. A renewed fountain is an excellent picture of renewed life. The roses, now faded ruins of past love, will bloom again. The use of the future tense, "bullirán, veremos," is a simple but effective means of pulling away from the melancholy mood of the poem up to this point and directing our attention to hope, not grief.

The muse has so far identified herself only as "la ausente"--that which was lacking in his life--she now identifies herself as Poetry:

¡ Despierta ya, poeta! ¡Yo soy la Poesía!
me despediste ingrato, cuando en lluvioso día
tu pérfida querida del lecho me lanzó;
hoy sufres, y me encuentres. Tú lloras, y regreso,
entre mis frescos labios palpita aún el beso,
ánimate, despierta, conóceme, soy yo! (p. 62)

She addresses him with the command "Despierta . . . " implying that since she is now present, renewal is possible. Her attitude is arrogant but compassionate, she communicates a feeling of strength to compensate for his weakness. She draws a firm contrast between herself and his "pérfida querida"; she, poetry, is genuine. The contemptuous attitude she shows toward the lover works on an immediate level, carrying the narrative aspect of the poem and engaging the reader's attention in what is, on one level, a basic human situation. Also, the attitude expands to a symbolic level and shows the superiority of poetry over ordinary things.

There is still the idea that the higher level of poetry can be reached only through the refinement of suffering: " . . . hoy sufres, y me encuentras." (p. 62).

The muse continues berating him in this fashion, for being too weak to find genuine fulfillment in poetry, drawing a sharp contrast between past error and the misery it caused, and the hope that the presence of poetry brings. His past happiness was illusory, passing quickly:

. . . las nubes del otoño, las nieves del invierno,
(cuán breves y fugaces pasaron para ti! (p. 62)

The past, without poetry, was characterized by oblivion to the world, absorption in self:

. . . inútilmente la pálida mañana
bajaba a despertarte, tocando a tu ventana . . .
cerrado estuvo siempre, poeta, su cristal! (p. 63)

This section of the poem becomes terribly repetitious, restating the same idea, the speaker's indifference to the world around him while absorbed in his own selfish love affair. The idea is repeated in images similar to this one, his indifference to some aspect of life which tries to awaken his sensibilities, in this instance the personified morning. This absorption in ordinary concerns prevented him from exercising his poetic gift:

. . . tu amada entre tus brazos, las sombras en el lecho,
afuera la mañana . . . y virgen el papel. (p. 63)

The sterility has ended with her return, however, bringing renewal:

La esposa que dejaste por la querida aleve
regresa fatigada, cubierta por la nieve,
pero trayendo intactas las flores del amor. (p. 64)

The flowers of love symbolize life, poetry, vitality, all that was missing in the bleak opening section of the poem.

The speaker's reaction to this long speech by the muse takes only two stanzas. It is a suitably humble acceptance of her admonitions, an expression of devotion to poetry, and an implied hope of doing better:

¡Tú sola nunca engañas . . .
serás como la estatua del ángel silencioso
que sin hablar nos dice: Tu alma es inmortal. (p. 64)

This poem then represents one expression of the principal emotion of this period of Nájera's poetry, dominated by a sense of crisis, an interior crisis of belief and faith and an attempt to resolve the crisis through poetry.

A preoccupation with the desire to find fulfillment in love continues in the poem "De vasallo," (p. 65). Also in the form of a monologue, the speaker of this poem sees himself as a prisoner of love. The poem is rather light in tone, pessimistic but not depressing. It is playful in its ironic acceptance of the situation. This ironic lightness is in interesting contrast to the deep emotion of "Musa blanca," in which love is an overriding force preventing the attainment of the ideal. Each poems deal with the love theme in a different manner, one serious and philosophical, the other light and ironic. These two strains run throughout Nájera's poetry, the lighter vein

providing some equilibrium to balance the serious. The serious and philosophical mood predominates in the poetry as a whole.

In "De vasallo," the preoccupation with love is not taken so seriously:

¡Con qué inquieto volar mis ilusiones
rondando están tu casa hospedadora! (p. 65)

The feeling of the opening lines is resigned in a rather carefree sense:

¡Cuán terco el pensamiento,
a las extrañas súplicas esquivo,
mal se aviene a habitar mi entendimiento
y quisiera seguirte fugitivo! (p. 65)

These lines are fast-paced, irregular, with an easily flowing rhythm suitable to a carefree tone, not slow and plodding like the rhythm of "Musa blanca." The use of rhythm to establish the basic feeling of a poem is again evident in these two examples.

The poem continues with an image of dreams falling captive to the beloved's charm like fish falling unawares into a net:

Cayeron sin sentido, uno por uno:
los reacios primeros;
luego los otros en tropel, cual brota
el agua de los prodigos veneros,
y cuantos nacen, ágiles y raudos,
corren a donde está la red tendida
sin que haya escollo que la marcha ataje
ni mano a libertarlos prevenida! (p. 66)

The closing lines begin with a statement that liberty may be desired by one who is imprisoned by chains, but not

. . . quien tiene por súaves lazos
las del trono gentil orlas de flores . . . (p. 66)

a rather hackneyed thought, but one which fits well into the mood of the poem and expresses the basic feeling.

A lyric refrain closes the poem with an image of the lover as prisoner:

Cuanto existe, señora, es prisionero:
la perla, de su concha nacarada;
de las nocturnas sombras, el lucero;
la vida, de la luz; yo, de mi amada. (p. 66)

Employing the common Nájera technique of associating the qualities of a visual scene with a state of mind, the speaker sums up his feeling. The helpless beauty of the imprisoned pearl is exactly the quality needed to capture the feeling of a lover imprisoned by the beloved. There is a progression from very tangible, visual means of conveying the feeling (la perla), to a still tangible but more vague, less vivid image (el lucero) to a purely abstract ideal (la vida, de la luz), to the figure of the poet himself. The segments in the progression all contain the necessary quality and feeling of a willing prisoner of beauty, culminating in the poet as lover. The progression intensifies the desired quality and makes the transference of qualities from tangible to abstract seem a natural, easily followed progression.

A desire for fulfillment or attainment of the ideal is the basic theme of Nájera's poetry; this desire is manifested in various forms, one of which is a feeling of

nostalgia for the past, or at least for an imaginary past in which the speaker was not assailed by doubt and crises of belief. This emotion usually takes the form of nostalgia for childhood, when the world seemed simple and understandable. A poem of this period which uses this basic theme is "La cena de Noche Buena" (II, p. 71), an expression of the speaker's feelings on Christmas Eve. His feelings are a mixture of religious joy, pleasure in the customs and habits of the holiday season, and melancholy nostalgia for past life and loves. The poem is composed of six short lyric sections dealing with some aspect of the occasion. It is dominated by memories of the past, as in the opening lines:

Acercaos a la mesa,
mis recuerdos, porque os llamo.
Id saliendo de la huesa
muertecitos que yo amo. (p. 71)

The scene is at a table, the usual setting for a pleasure-filled holiday banquet, but in this case the scene is peopled by memories, not by jolly guests. Such a mixture of sad shadows of the past within the context of what should be a party atmosphere creates an eerie feeling of disquiet; the usual holiday feeling of cheer is replaced by disquieting foreboding. The diminutive form of "muertecitos" alleviates somewhat the rather morbid overtones of the lines, indicating a positive feeling on the part of the poet and affection toward the memories. He continues addressing the memories in the next lines:

Cosas idas, cosas muertas,
ilusiones ya perdidas,

acercaos a mis puertas,
cosas muertas, cosas idas! (p. 71)

These lines take the form of a lyric refrain repeating and stressing what has been said in the opening lines. Taking the attitude of a jolly host the speaker calls his past memories to gather round. These lines clearly reveal the part which rhythm plays in creating the poem's effect. Short, fast-paced lines with a heavily accentuated beat take immediate hold of the reader's attention. Frequent repetition of heavily accented lines lends a festival air, and the poem's meter becomes almost a dance-like tune. Interplay between the words "idas" and "muertas" intensifies the fact that these things are shadows of the past, yet the lyric atmosphere and language prevent a depressing preoccupation with the past. The tone of the poem is more like a sigh than a cry of pain or grief. There is a sense of energy underlying the rapid rise and fall of the language which sustains the basically positive feeling of the poem. Underlying these verses is a feeling which underlies most of Najera's poetry; that is the feeling of an attempt to capture or recapture something elusive and ill-defined, in this case experiences from the past. The speaker openly states his own feeling:

. . . cae muy triste la nevada,
tengo miedo, tengo frío. (p. 71)

The snowfall creates a quiet, introspective mood, greatly heightened by the adjective "triste." Within this context the speaker introduces his state of mind in a line which continues the lyric feeling of the stanza. The repetition of the verb

with a different noun serves to communicate two aspects of his feeling and describe it rather precisely, as well as to situate the line and the poet within the lyric context. The rhythm of the line as well as the adjectives serve to bring the fast-paced opening to a slower movement, somewhat toning down the lyric opening of the poem and creating a quieter, more introspective mood, which culminates with the mentioning that "esta noche es Noche Buena." Thus the opening section closes on a quieter note than it opened; the lyric opening sets a tone of serious yet controlled emotion, a graceful and dignified expression of a deep emotional nostalgia for the past. The meter throughout the poem continues with the same energetic lightness, maintaining the feeling set in the opening, but on a more understated, restrained level.

The second section is addressed to a dead sister, making the nostalgia very personal:

. . . si vivieras todavía,
cuando siento mi alma triste
'cuántas cosas te diría! (p. 72)

The use of the conditional sentence here stresses the impossibility of attaining what is desired, the reason for the speaker's loneliness. The desire here is for an obvious impossibility, the return of the sister from the dead to celebrate the holiday, then return to the dead:

. . . podrás irte, podrás irte,
y tendremos que decirte:
hasta la otra Noche Buena!

This type of desire could become a rather morbid obsession with death, but it is prevented from doing so in this poem

by the light touch of the lyric and the sincerity of the speaker's emotion; the desire is on a purely spiritual level with no emphasis on the physical or repulsive aspects of death. There is a feeling of gentleness pervading the reference to the "muertecitos," including the sister, which maintains the dignified grace of the poem:

. . . deja, pues, oh muertecita!,
tu callada sepultura. (p. 72)

The word "callada" is the key. Silence, especially the silence of the grave, prevents communication, and the desire for communication is one of the most persistent of Nájera's themes. The "callada sepultura" is something closed and locked, preventing his obtaining entrance or communication; thus Nájera's basic theme manifests itself, the inability to fulfill a goal or need.

A tender stanza follows, addressed to the infant Jesus as "el Dios, recién nacido." There is an undercurrent of pessimism in this section. At midnight, the traditional moment of Jesus's birth

la cera se deshace
combatida por el viento. (p. 73)

The feeling of agitation which is suggested in the image of the sputtering candle is intensified by the loneliness of the speaker:

Nadie cuida a los pastores,
nadie canta villancicos . . . (p. 73)

Amid the loneliness and memories of happier times, the speaker is unable to feel the joy inherent in the day, and has difficulty seeing the baby as alive and vibrant: "me parece que

está muerto," he says of the sleeping Jesus. The emotions of loneliness and unease inhibit his ability to experience fully the desired emotions--another ideal or goal which is frustrated. The child will not respond to him, and he expresses the need for the satisfaction or spiritual joy which is the goal he desires: " . . . que tu voz me purifique" The dead sister and the baby Jesus who will not respond to him are both parts of an unrealized goal or need.

The pessimism of the poem deepens, becoming the dominant feeling in the following two stanzas or sections in which the speaker despairs over his loneliness. He has set a scene of holiday cheer, yet is alone with no children to enjoy the gifts he has brought:

¿Por qué no vienen
si aquí tantos juguetes
y dulces tienen?

Such a scene of emptiness, of expectations and emotions aroused and then left unfulfilled, is one of the most agonizing experiences possible for a sensitive, lonely soul, and the feeling expressed is a perfect example of Nájera's nearly obsessive preoccupation with unsatisfied need. The need which remains so painfully unsatisfied is the need for love: "Amor que ennoblece y salva" (p. 74).

The poem ends on a note of hope, however; the pessimism is not complete, but is tempered by knowledge of a better spiritual world. The change in attitude takes place with a vision of Jesus come to life:

¡No doblan las campanas,
no, que repican! . . .

Jesús no yace muerto,
que está dormido! (p. 75)

This vision fills him with encouragement: "Casta ilusión que me alientas!" (p. 76). There is a revival from the depression of the first sections: "Seré bueno, seré bueno!" It is this religious hope of spiritual life which causes renewed optimism.

No pienso con desconsuelo
en los seres ya perdidos . . .
mis muertecitos queridos
están cantando en el cielo! (p. 76)

The religious emotion expressed here differs from that expressed in Nájera's early religious poems. This poem is much more subtle and refined, not such a blatant and simple acceptance of dogma as, for example, is "María," (I, p. 43) where he simply states without hesitation: "Sonó la voz de Dios . . ." and so on. The religious thought given expression in Nájera's poetry has become less dogmatic, more closely linked with the basic pre-occupations and philosophical bases of the poetry as a whole. The religious feeling has fused more and more into the overall theme of search for the ideal.

A key poem for understanding Nájera's work is "A Cecilia" (II, p. 77), a lyric poem of lovely tenderness addressed to his wife. The figure of Cecilia is an object of deep love on the part of the poet, and is the symbol of something greatly desired and esteemed by him, a being of purity and beauty. Cecilia is not clearly delineated in the poem; she remains in the background as the source

of inspiration. The poem is again narrated in the first person singular in the form of a monologue in which the speaker expresses desire to find poetic inspiration equal to the task of describing her. The essence of the poem is his search for poetic expression.²

Roughly three large sections comprise the poem, divided into stanzas of differing length. The first section is his opening statement of the need to find expression, release of emotion. The second section explores possible means of putting feeling to form and creating poetry. The last section is an invocation to the muse, asking aid in creating something to formalize his emotions. As a part of this section, there is a closing statement settling on flowers as the proper means.

The first section consists of three stanzas of four lines each, lines of medium length and a regular, even rhythm with a calm, understated effect:

Busco en mi alma lo más obscuro,
lo más secreto que exista en mí,
la estrofa virgen, el verso puro . . .
y nada encuentro digno de ti! (p. 77)

The point of view of the poem is turned inward from the very beginning, directed into the speaker's own consciousness, seeking within himself a means of expression. The emphasis is on finding something to equal her purity ("la estrofa virgen, el verso puro"). The very first word in the poem establishes the poetic tone, which remains steady

throughout; it is a feeling of personal search. The first person singular of "buscar" conveys this feeling perfectly. The use of the subjunctive "exista" intensifies the uncertainty surrounding the possibility of finding what is desired. The second stanza intensifies the feeling of search by implying that what is sought was once actually in possession; the loss of something once possessed is a stronger emotion than simply wanting something in an abstract sense:

Llamo a mis versos y ya se han ido.
 ¿Por qué insensato los prodigué?
 ¿Por qué en mi alma, como en un nido,
 para este libro no los guardé? (p. 77)

The desire to recapture past inspiration is the theme of the third stanza: "Volved, oh versos de castos días" The intense desire for renewal dominates, stressed by the imperative form "Volved" and "llenad de nuevo." Purity remains as a constant preoccupation in "castos dias." The desire for renewed experience is put into sensory form in the desire to fill his heart with "perfumes y armonías." Harmony, especially, is an essential part of the poetic ideal he seeks. The emphasis is still on an interior search by the poet for poetry within himself: "mi corazón."

Several poetic symbols are explored in the second of the larger sections. There are three stanzas, each

suggesting some tangible object which can be associated with an aspect of the poetic nature of Cecilia. The first of these evokes the sound of bells:

Suave repique de la campana,
toque del alba, místico acento
que la novicia por la mañana
oye en la celda de su convento . . . (p. 77)

The essential quality of the bells is purity, suggested by the words "alba" and "místico." Cecilia is seen as "novicia," further emphasizing her purity. The insistence in the stanza on morning--"toque del alba" and "por la mañana," establishes the feeling of freshness and renewal which she represents to the poet. The fact that she is represented in her convent cell establishes her as a part of the purity or ideal which is closed to the speaker and desired by him. The bell thus becomes a means of communicating with her and reaching out to the ideal of purity which is a part of the desired poetic ideal. It is therefore one avenue to spiritual and intellectual renewal: "llenad de nuevo mi pensamiento." (p. 78). The freshness of Cecilia (the ideal) furnishes the spiritual nourishment he needs.

The second metaphor is perfume:

Fresco perfume . . .
que de las rosas recién abiertas
brotas apenas dispunta el día. (p. 78)

Freshness is again the essential quality. Perfume is something which stimulates the senses, raises awareness to new

levels; it renews and reinvigorates both physically and spiritually. Renewal is the quality most associated with perfume in this case in the words, "recién abiertas" and "brotas." His desire is for the power of renewal to stimulate him to a new spiritual level--"llena de aromas el alma mía!" (p. 78) to enable him to reach the level of Cecilia and be able to approach her and the poetic reality she represents.

A series of tangible objects is suggested in the third stanza of this section which might impart to the speaker some of their purity and enable him to express himself to Cecilia:

Plumas de cisne, pieles de grmiño,
copos de nieve, cutis de niño,
alas intactas de tortolitas,
pétalos blancos de margaritas . . . (p. 78)

These objects are all delicate, fragile, graceful, of elegant beauty. Precisely these qualities of delicate beauty are what is needed to approach the poetic Cecilia. They are all objects which are common enough, yet outside the frame of reference of everyday reality, and suggestive of a perceptive sensibility which sees beauty in small, unpretentious things. They share the quality of purity: "dadme vuestra blancura." Again the color white suggests purity. The poet again needs the qualities of these objects to renew his spirit:

. . . mis estrofas de vida llenas,
serán por castas, nobles y buenas . . . (p. 78)

The three adjectives sum up his desire; they function as well as a description of the desired poetic ideal, which must be pure, noble, and good. These qualities, stated in one form or another, appear again and again as descriptions of the desired state; they fuse into a suggestion of the whole sought-after ideal, represented still by the idealized figure of Cecilia: " . . . dignas, Cecilia, de tu hermosura." (p. 78).

In the last, and longest, of the three sections the speaker calls upon the muse to help him find inspiration to approach the poetic world of Cecilia. This section is divided into five short stanzas. The first establishes his sense of companionship with the muse (poetry):

Mi compañera, musa divina,
Ven un instante, baja ligera . . . (p. 78)

The muse is divine, a common enough appellation, in this case suggesting that she is a part of that ideal existence so sought by the poet. She is described as "la del vestido de muselina . . . ," suggesting that she shares that purity of spirit represented by whiteness. What is desired of poetry is a means of approach to Cecilia:

. . . lleva mis flores a donde espera
y luego . . . para siempre me dejarás. (p. 78)

He sees poetry not as simply a plaything of beauty or an elegant pastime, but as a means of attaining a higher plane of existence; it is an avenue to growth and renewal. Its powers of transformation are permanent, not temporary
" . . . para siempre"

Lyric freshness infuses his attitude toward the muse:

¡Ven tú, la blanca, tú, la inocente,
la que levantas limpia tu frente,
la que a mis padres canta en mi hogar,
la que a la virgen púdica reza,
y en la guirnalda de su cabeza
trae los botones del azahar! (p. 78-79)

The feeling of freshness is established by repetition of adjectives imparting this quality--"blanca, inocente, limpia, púdica"--all associated with the muse. Three visual images complete the stanza: the muse singing to his parents, praying to the Virgin, and carrying a garland of flowers around her head. The first two associate attitudes and emotions with her, the emotions of nostalgia and tenderness which he feels about the purity of family and religious life. Such association of mental and emotional attitudes enlarges the impression of the muse on a more interior level than purely physical qualities. The last image is purely visual, of flowers--a more conventional means of describing poetry. Within this poem, in the context of the attitudes already established, however, this image serves as a resumé of the qualities of purity and freshness associated with her; the flowers, especially flower buds, the new and unopened bloom, imbue her with a special aura of newness.

The aura of freshness established with the flowers carries through to the last section of the poem, the final

invocation to the muse. Flowers are the means of approaching the poetic Cecilia:

Toma mis flores: llega a su puerta . . .
 si está dormida, mientras despierta
 sobre su mesa deja mis flores.
 Déjalas y huye; pasa de prisa,
 como las ondas, como las nubes . . . (p. 79)

In this exhortation to the muse to carry the speaker's flowers (as a means of declaration of his love) to Cecilia, a feeling of awe permeates the attitude toward Cecilia; she is still not described in physical terms, but remains a distant, mysterious entity unapproachable by ordinary means. The manner in which the speaker instructs the muse to leave the flowers establishes an atmosphere of awe and hesitation. The instructions are given in a hasty, breathless manner, with a series of short, rapid phrases each concerning a quick, specific action: "toma mis flores . . . llega a su puerta . . . pasa muy quedo . . . deja mis flores." There is a hint of fear in these statements that her fragile beauty will disintegrate if approached too boldly. Each phrase is built around a verb which is the principal segment of each; such a rapid series of verbs almost bare of elements which significantly alter their meaning or impede the action creates a quickly moving scene which contributes an overlay of timidity and nervousness to his attitude toward her. The only adjectives--"quedo, dormida"--contribute to an awe-filled moment by stilling any expression of outward emotion on the part of Cecilia

or the muse and allowing the scene to generate its own feeling of underlying emotion suspended for a moment in a lyric image.

The speaker recapitulates his instructions, stressing speed and tension: "Déjalas y huye; pasa de prisa." The two visual images which follow ". . . como las ondas, como las nubes . . ." condense his haste into a tangible form which brings that particular aspect of the scene to a culmination, and brings to rest the initial image of the muse's action.

The stanza continues in the same manner, repeating what has been established in the first half, increasing the tension and lyric effect of the scene. Stress is put on the ethereal quality of Cecilia: "Es que está hablando con los querubes!" The muse is again admonished not to tarry long: ". . . te diera envidia su gentileza!" Such a comparison of the beauty of the two, placing Cecilia's beauty above that of the muse herself, intensifies the speaker's already awe-struck worship of Cecilia. On a more philosophical level, this puts the ideal beauty which is the source of poetic inspiration at the very pinnacle of the speaker's scale of values, seemingly even higher than the poetry itself.

The stanza ends with the poet's admonition to the muse to return to him after she has taken his message to Cecilia:

... vuelve a casa con mi tristeza;
 rápida corre con pie ligero;
 lleva mis flores: aquí te espero. (p. 79)

This stanza actually operates by setting up a dramatic situation in miniature which operates on a literal level and on a symbolic level as well. The dramatic scene created on the literal level distills the essential emotions into visual form, enabling the reader to reproduce the poet's state of mind within his own mind by means of the dramatic vignette. The literal level creates a scene in which the poet admonishes a third figure to approach the lovely girl; it is, in short, a conventional situation in traditional love poetry in which the lover asks an intermediary to declare his love. Using this traditional poetic device, he reveals his feeling. On the more symbolic level, the purpose of the passage is to reveal the poet's state of mind in relation to his source of poetic inspiration, the unattainable ideal, personified in the figure of Cecilia. He does this by representing her as a beautiful, unattainable being whom he can approach only through the intermediary of poetry.

The dramatic scene created by the poet, of the muse carrying flowers to the sleeping girl, creates a tension which reproduces the essential feeling needed in the poem. The scene involves three characters: the speaker, the muse and the figure of Cecilia. The attitude shown toward Cecilia is of timid awe mixed with intense desire to possess

the ideal. This attitude comes through in his admonitions of haste and warnings not to disturb her. The picture of the poet waiting anxiously while the messenger hurries to the girl's presence conveys his agitation and uncertainty about reaching his goal. The distant, ethereal figure of Cecilia embodies the undefinable perfection of the poetic ideal he seeks.

However, the untouchable beauty of Cecilia remains unspoiled at the close of the poem. The poet backs away from any desire to arrive at her presence or disturb her with his imperfect being:

Que no las toque, que no las mire;
basta a mi anhelo que las respire.
Que abandonadas en esa estancia . . .
llenen la alcoba con su fragancia! (p. 79-80)

What he is saying in essence is that it is impossible for an imperfect being to attain the ideal, or an ideal such as Cecilia; it is enough for our imperfect sensibilities to have knowledge of the existence or possibility of such an ideal and to base our lives on a search for it. On a literal, or dramatic level, the love backs away from the figure of the beauty and is content to bask in the knowledge that she is present.

The burning desire to approach Cecilia, which runs through the entire poem up to this point, and reaches its most intense moment in the next to last stanza, runs out at the end, gradually settling into the knowledge that the ideal is still for him unattainable:

No las anhelan ni las esperan . . .
 Pasa de prisa los corredores,
 y deja, musa, que allí se mueran. (p. 80)

The suitor's offer has been rejected, or at least ignored; he must give up and live with only the suggestion of the beauty which is impossible for him to know. On a symbolic level, the poet must learn to live with only imperfect knowledge of his source of poetic inspiration and be content to aspire to it through poetry. He is, in a word, resigned.

The cadence of the language slows perceptibly as the poem ends, indicating his waning enthusiasm. "Déjalas y huye . . . como las ondas . . ." slows to "basta a mi anhelo que las respire . . .," then finally into " . . . deja . . . que allí se mueran." The word "allí" linked to the finality of the verb "se mueran" situates the girl even farther away from him than she has been. The death of the flowers represents the end of his hopes of attaining his ideal, and he must settle into resignation.

The frustration resulting from inability to realize the goal of arriving at knowledge of the poetic ideal, the basis of Nájera's poetic work, finds expression in the poem "Resucitarán" (II, p. 81), which puts the feeling into a visual image, that of kisses attempting to escape the poet's lips, like birds from a nest, and reach the lips of the beloved and thus give expression to his need for love and communication. There is no statement of

any philosophical ideal of the poetic search realized, but this feeling is implicit in the poem. The frustration he feels at being unable to express his love is one aspect of his overall theme. The title, of course, implies optimism, but it is in the future tense, putting the hope of satisfaction in the future.

Eight short stanzas comprise the poem; the basic image is established in the first:

Los pájaros que en sus nidos
mueren, ¿a dónde se van?
Y en qué lugar escondidos
están, muertos o dormidos,
los besos que no se dan? (p. 81)

The picture of birds dying in their nests is particularly apt to convey the feeling of something trying to rise above some physical entrapment, but failing and being pulled back by a resisting force and prevented from realizing the goal. The natural function of a bird is to fly, to soar above the inhibiting forces of the physical world. A bird flying is the very picture of freedom, of basic needs given fulfillment. The natural function of a kiss is the expression of love and communication between two people; it too is the fulfillment of very basic needs, both physical and emotional. When either of these means of expression is denied, the result is repression of basic needs and the inhibition of a living being from realizing its full potential. Thus the situation is the same for the

dying birds and the dying kisses; both are vital life forces denied.

The question form in the stanza creates an air of mystery, or of puzzlement at the end result of this situation. The verb "se van" expresses the mystery of the bird's destiny, the fleetingness of their lives; the verb "se dan" expresses the need to put emotional feeling into physical expression. The phrase "muertos o dormidos" leaves open the possibility that the kisses can be called into life; sleeping does not have the finality of death.

The image of kisses like birds leaving the nest is carried over into the second stanza, in which the kisses are pictured as prisoners unsuccessfully attempting to find release:

. . . se enferman pronto mis besos
y apenas nacen, se mueran! (p. 81)

The contraposition of "nacen" and "se mueran" creates the sensation of early death, a brief moment of life snuffed out instantly by death. The feeling of repressed emotion is summed up in a definition of a sigh as "Un beso que no se dió!" (p. 81).

The kisses struggle for release as a prisoner struggles for freedom, but they are prevented, and die:

. . . que ya está de besos llena
la tumba del corazón! (p. 81)

The heart as a tomb is one of his stronger images, capturing the intense feeling of frustration at not being able to release its energies. The center of feeling which should be the repository of love is instead only a grave of dead feelings. A lyric stanza recapitulates the image which has been established:

¿Qué son las bocas? Son nidos.
 ¿Y los besos? ¡Aves locas!
 Por eso, apenas nacidos,
 de sus nidos aburridos
 salen buscando otras bocas. (p. 82)

The repetition and interplay of sounds create a lyric feeling which infuses the stanza with deep emotion, a rather stylized static image which stabilizes and universalizes the central emotion. The repetition of the vowels and the "s" sound creates a rather sing-song effect which focuses the reader's attention on the key words--"bocas, nidos, besos, locas"--as well as lending a lyric note increased by the fast-paced rhythm with its flowing rise and fall. The word "locas" intensifies the desire inherent in the kisses, making their struggle for release (and the poet's struggle for expression) all the more acute. In the second half, the interplay of the "idos" sounds creates the same effect: "nacidos, nidos, aburridos."

The blame for the poet's difficulty is put upon an uncooperative lover in the next to last stanza, which maintains the central image:

¿Por qué en cárcel sepulcral
 se trueca el nido del ave?
 ¿Por qué los tratas tan mal,
 si tus labios de coral
 son los que tienen la llave? (p. 82)

The reference to the "cárcel sepulcral" reinforces the poem's basic image and emotion. These two words both carry a very negative connotation of suffering and imprisonment; used together in the context of the poet's situation, they intensify the feeling, and the last lines focus the established feeling on the poet and his particular problem.

A note of optimism closes the poem, however, as suggested in the title. Engraved on his heart (the tomb of frustrated kisses) is the hope of new life:

. . . en vuestra tumba, mis muertos,
 dice: ¡Resucitaréis! (p. 82)

The contraposition of the words "tumba, muertos," and "Resucitaréis" summarizes the fate of his desire and his hope of future fulfillment, here expressed in the form of hope for resurrection or renewal of his desires and hopes.

The deepening pessimism which is characteristic of this period of poetry is expressed in "To Be" (II, p. 105), in which we see a metaphysical, cosmic despair expressed about the ability of suffering mankind to overcome its eternal pain:

Aplicad el oído a la abra oscura
 de los pasados tiempos . . .
 Dentro cae
 lágrima eterna! (p. 105)

The emotion here is not a personal grief or self-pity, nor any variety of absorption in personal feelings and situation. It is much more philosophical, universal in scope than, for example a line like " . . . es . . . negra el ala de mi torvo pensamiento" from "Hamlet a Ofelia" (I, p. 296) which dates from 1880. The speaker here is involving himself in a less personal, self-centered world, and wondering about the ultimate fate of a human race which is so driven by its desires:

La suprema ambición de cuanto existe
es perderse en la nada, aniquilarse,
dormir sin sueños! . . . (p. 106)

Such a peaceful, Nirvana-like state is of course denied us:

Queremos reposar un solo instante
y una voz en la sombra dice: ¡Anda! (p. 106)

The tension created in the speaker by his desire to "dormir sin sueños" and the opposing desires which drive him on result in a profound pessimism, raised to a universal plane of metaphysical despair: " . . . que la vida pare . . . Y ruede el mundo cual planeta muerto . . ." (p. 106). Again, the poet's seeming resignation to such a fate is the basis of his attitude in the poem.

The despair or pessimism which forms such an important base of Nájera's poetry is given a more personal expression in the poem "Monólogo del incrédulo" (II, p. 107). The title itself is indicative of the place the poem holds in the trajectory of his work. Much of Nájera's poetry is

a personal monologue of inner feelings and view of the world; the first person monologues of his poems operate both on a personal level and in a more philosophical or universal context. This particular monologue is that of an "incrédulo," an unbeliever or doubter who is undergoing a crisis of belief. As we have seen, a profound spiritual crisis lies at the base of Nájera's poetic inspiration, a crisis which takes several forms: a religious crisis expressed in orthodox Roman Catholic context, a deep desire to attain an impossible state of perfection, a nostalgia for the simple, innocent world of childhood. This poem, "Monólogo del incrédulo" is a sort of *résumé* of these underlying desires, which have proven impossible to realize and have resulted in a rather hopeless state of mind on the part of the poet, what Gómez del Prado calls "el tono desesperado."³ There is an underlying strength however, which prevents this attitude from degenerating into mere self-pity.

This particular poem, unnecessarily long and repetitious, repeats in several ways the negative view of life which has resulted from his fruitless quest. The poem is significant mainly as a sort of cross section of his principal themes. The main idea is repeated several times over, exploring different aspects of his state of mind. The pessimistic tone is set from the beginning, in which life is seen as punishment:

La existencia no pedida . . .
 ¿es sentència merecida?
 Decidme: ¿vale la vida
 la pena de que vivamos? (p. 107)

The phrase "no pedida" suggests the bitterness that permeates the entire poem. The attitude toward life is quite negative, expressed in such words as "sentencia" and "pena;" it is an attitude of almost obsessive preoccupation with fate, the negative side of life, the impossibility of finding happiness. The result is a curiously baroque, almost quevedesque outlook with emphasis on the hopelessness of man's condition:

Diome el acaso la vida,
 y la muerte apercebida
 desde que nací me espera . . . (p. 107)

Fatalism permeates these lines, in the emphasis on "acaso" as the source of life, with no other end in sight but death. A great weariness is expressed in the phrase "desde que nací," an example of Nájera's strong sense of time which passes but never leads to any greater experience of life.

However, there is at the same time a certain strength, a health of attitude underlying his pessimism which prevents his attitude from becoming morbid:

Seré torpe, seré tonto,
 pero víctima, no soy. (p. 108)

The determination to maintain human dignity and resiliency is the basis of this attitude. A victim is a rather pathetic figure, beaten and destroyed even though he may have resisted. It is precisely this pathetic degradation

which must be avoided to maintain the dignity which is characteristic of Nájera's best work. He may be "torpe" or "tonto," words which, to be sure, express human weakness, but not the lack of essential nobility of spirit which is implied by "víctima."

Such determination to maintain dignity results in a very stoic attitude, an unflinching acceptance of both life and death, also expressed in solemn, Quevedo-like cadences which confront the problem head-on, devoid of any hint of hysteria or surrender:

. . . el hombre de ánimo fuerte
no llama tanto a la muerte:
sale sin miedo a buscarla. (p. 109)

The emphasis is on positive, straightforward action, even in the face of death, expressed in words like "fuerte" and "sin miedo," and the positive action implied in the verb "buscar" in contraposition with the more passive "llama."

Alongside this stoic determination is a feeling of conflict, an interior struggle within the speaker to maintain his stoic reserve:

¿Por qué, no obstante, vacilo,
cuando me brindo reposo
ese hogar mudo y tranquilo? (p. 109)

These lines show the tension which is constant in Nájera's poetry between his desire to experience life to the fullest and the opposing desire of easing the pain of life and finding a sort of Nirvana-like oblivion. His final determination, then, is to life:

Nos va enredando la vida
entre sus hilos de araña,
y, aunque la vida nos daña,
no encontramos la salida. (p. 110)

A sense of being trapped, for better or worse, in life and its experiences, dominates the poet's thinking. A feeling of increasing involvement is created in the progressive tense of "va enredando"; the feeling which is implied is one of deepening experience, even though it is one of pain: "nos daña." This trapped feeling leads to another typically Nájera reaction, a nostalgia for childhood innocence:

. . . si con la muerte he de ir
me irá mi madre a buscar. (p. 110)

The nostalgic aspect of his poetry has been present from the first, and continues as one facet of his need to experience a more nearly perfect, ideal existence. His basic theme is expressed quite explicitly:

En este infinito anhelo,
en esta implacable guerra,
los que nos atan al suelo
no son los monstruos del cielo,
son los seres de la tierra. (p. 111)

Being bound to imperfect, earthly things in the face of his "infinito anhelo" is the essence of Nájera's poetry, which is in itself an attempt to escape and rise to higher experience. The word "infinito" conveys his innermost, personal feelings of desire, which know no material boundary, to experience reality outside material boundaries. His poetry, it may be said, results from and reflects the agony of a finite mind searching for infinite reality. The

phrase "nos atan al suelo" reflects frustration at being bound to imperfect reality, the verb "atan" implies an entrapment against which one must struggle. The feeling is expressed in tangible terms--being tied to earth--but it of course conveys the impression of an entire state of mind. The last two lines further reflect frustration at the world, contrasting imaginary "monstruos" with very real "seres." The contrast between these two words demonstrates his disgust with the human race which, obviously, does not share the desire for an ideal world.

One phrase which appears in this poem reflects the "sed del ideal," which may be taken as a statement of Nájera's basic theme:

. . . quiero dar vidas . . . yo mismo
siento la sed del amor. (p. 112)

Spiritual thirst here takes the form of thirst for love, another manifestation of the desire for a more noble and ideal plane of existence which permeates Nájera's work. This particular phrase expresses desire for communion with other human beings which is a necessary part of the desire for fullness of experience. This desire, like all aspects of desire for the ideal, is frustrated, and leads to the state of discouragement expressed in the next stanza:

De suerte que engendraré
otro ser tan desgraciado,
y por fuerza lo amaré
y en seguida sentiré
dolor de haberlo engendrado. (p. 112)

The speaker is caught, again, between the desire to reach out, to open to new experience, and the depressing conviction that it will come to a failure. He speaks with the same mixed emotions of the beloved, who is seen as an innocent being, "casta y buena," that he has disturbed and made unhappy with his constant, unsatisfiable questing:

. . . por distraer mi pena,
fui su alma a despertar. (p. 112)

The last line conveys the feeling of opening up one's sensibilities, of awakening to fuller experience, which runs as a constant desire throughout the poetry. It is, however, impossible to accomplish and the speaker falls into a crisis of doubt and depression, expressed in such lines as:

¿Por qué de su amor me escondó?
¿No me ama? Tiembla mi fe . . . (p. 113)

He refers to himself as "un hombre que es humo, nada . . . ," incapable of realizing his dreams. This phrase reflects a view common in Nájera of the human as a weak being who disappears without realizing his own potential.

The greatest pain, according to this poem, is not unreciprocated love, but a past love which has grown cold:

No amar ya lo antes amado
es el supremo dolor. (p. 114)

Such an attitude is one aspect of the preoccupation with experience which eludes his grasp, the pain of being sensitive to experience, of almost reaching the point of fulfillment of desires and needs, then seeing the desired goal slip away; the ideal, in other words, is almost, but not

quite, attained, is sampled, but not fully known. This attitude also reflects a preoccupation with passing time which uses up experience before it can be fully enjoyed, leading to a nostalgia for the past, a tendency to idealize the past exhibited in such poems as "La cena de Noche Buena."

This stanza is followed with one incorporating a very vivid image:

Es como al sepulcro ir
del pequenuelo querido,
y quererlo revivir,
y la tristeza sentir
de hallarlo siempre dormido. (p. 114)

The image of the dead child is an image of unrealized potential, of life not given a chance to be fulfilled, of possibility unrealized. In short, the child symbolized the entire range of the unexplored possibilities of life which obsess the poet. If this full range of human potential could be brought to life, the ideal might be attained. The ever present disparity between possibility and reality which is not far from the surface of any Najera poem lies at the heart of this image. The reality is expressed in negative words: "sepulcro, tristeza, dormido." The hope of realized potential is expressed only in rather faint optimism in the phrase "quererlo revivir."

The poem ends on a plaintive note, leaving unsolved the basic dilemma:

En vano buscan salida
las almas desesperadas,
estás en mi alma, vida,
como el puñal en la herida . . . (p. 115)

The soul which he is describing is of course his own, tortured by the sensitivity to sensation which life makes inevitable. The image of life like a dagger is a strikingly effective one, transferring the sensation of a very acute physical pain to a spiritual level; the image thus operates simultaneously on both a tangible and intangible level. Physical pain is perhaps the only really effective instantaneous manner of communicating the sensation of emotional anguish; nothing else communicates with quite such immediate force.

The natural desire for a soul in such a situation is for a way out, and "salida" is exactly the desire expressed here. Escape from an imperfect world of weakness and pain into a poetic world of ideal existence is the constant theme of Nájera's poetry, but it is always "En vano." The end result of his frustrated search is an exasperated plea to God for some solution: " . . . o surge en mi sombra, oh, Dios!" (p. 115).

Following "Monólogo del incrédulo" is a poem which finds a speaker in a different state of mind, a determination to escape into a poetic world. This poem is "El hada verde," subtitled "Canción del Bohemio." It is precisely this, in praise of the Bohemian life of exploration of the senses and mind. It is significant that such an exercise in escapism follows the crisis of belief of "Monólogo del incrédulo." It is not really escapism in a

negative or cowardly sense; rather it is a desire to explore the entire range of human experience and sensation, to delve beyond the confines of immediate reality and personal problems.

The green phantasm symbolizes this sort of desperate escape and questing. He sees the phantasm in a "fiebre implacable," conveying a feeling of a driving, insistent need to explore the sensations of life, which will not allow a lapse into easy complacency. The phantasm represents mystery, the unknown, the feverish, nervous exhaustion which results from the relentless sensitivity to life. The color green is the color of fertility, of life, but it has also the negative connotation of a fever, of illness. These two opposing aspects of the life process fuse in the figure of the phantasm, lending it both negative and positive aspects. It is referred to in terms of a fever from which there is no relief: "Es nuestra musa glauca y sombría" (p. 117); "la que flotas en nuestras venas enardecidas," (p. 118), and so on. It is also seen as the hope for oblivion, for release from the constant pain of desire which is a dominant theme of Nájera:

Llega y nos dice--Soy el Olvido;
Yo tus dolores aliviare . . . (p. 117)

The final image of the phantasm is based on impressions of the color green in various contexts:

Son ojos verdes los que buscamos,
verde el tapete donde jugué,
verdes absintios los que apuramos,
y verde el sauce que colocamos
en tu sepulcro, pobre Musset! (p. 118)

Green symbolized the poetic search, "ojos verdes que buscamos," which for Nájera is a search for life in its fullest maturity. It also symbolizes the elegant life of materialism which he seems willing to accept as partial substitute for or sublimation for the full spiritual life: "verde . . . tapete," and "verdes absintios." Green is also the color of resignation and hope, of the noble and dignified grave for which the poetic search seems doomed, symbolized by the grave of Musset: "verde el sauce . . . en tu sepulcro."

Such resignation became the dominant tone of Nájera's poetry in 1887; this feeling fused with the glowing lyricism which had always been Nájera's particular gift, to form his most mature poetry.

CHAPTER IV

ELEGIAC POEMS

The poetry written in the year 1887 marks the beginning of the period which contains the most mature and successful fusion of the various elements of Nájera's work, resulting in several poems which are clearly the poet's masterpieces. These poems display a controlled intensity of emotion coupled with precision of technical skill which mark them as mature work with regard to philosophic content and poetic technique.

The term "elegiac" best describes the mood or state of mind which forms the basis of the work of this period. Nájera's work is dominated by a sense of conflict--emotional and spiritual conflict centering around a profound need to overcome the imperfection of human life. The years 1887 to 1894 produced a number of poems characterized by a mood of resolution of conflict, of looking back on life with a resigned, retrospective attitude marked by dignity and restraint.²

Philosophically, this group of poems brings to culmination the intellectual and spiritual crisis which underlies Nájera's entire poetic work, a crisis centering on a need to find ideal fulfillment of life and the resulting disillusionment with the inevitable impossibility of satisfaction. "Monólogo del incrédulo" expresses the poet's

spiritual crisis stemming from "este infinito anhelo" (p. 111). Other poems from 1887 show other sides of his reaction to such a personal crisis. "El hada verde" expresses the emotional turmoil following the crisis of belief, and pinpoints poetry as the means of emotional release. Lighter poems, e.g. "En un cromó" (II, p. 121), answer with lyric resignation:

. . . más rápido que esas ondas
niña de las trenzas blondas
pasa cantando el amor. (p. 121)

Technically, the best poems of the last period show Nájera at a point of absolute control over language, expressing intense emotion without emotionalism. Although in many poems there is the same wordiness and lack of control which weaken so much of his work, there is, in the best of these poems, a sense of proportion and balance which gives them a nearly classical feeling of self control.

Insofar as any one year can be pinpointed as a turning point in the trajectory of a poet's work, the year 1887 can be so designated in the work of Gutiérrez Nájera, containing as it does excellent poems both of conflict and resolution. The poems of conflict have been discussed ("Monólogo del incrédulo," "El hada verde"). "Desde lejos" (II p. 119) represents the other type of poem in which the poet's emotional conflicts have been refined to a point of self-mastery, resulting in poems of tender feeling and great dignity.

The title itself, "Desde lejos," communicates the basic emotion of something desired from afar. A distance is set between the speaker and the attainment of his desire. The idea of a distant ideal is central to Nájera's poetry; the difference in poems often grows out of varying reactions to this central concern. In "Desde lejos," strong emotion restrained by technical control create the total effect.

Built around an amatory theme, in which a lover asks his beloved when their desire will be fulfilled with a kiss, the poem conveys a sense of strength, of desire strong enough and genuine enough to endure undamaged until its fulfillment in " . . . el dulce sacrilegio de besarte" (p. 119). The real theme of the poem is not the amatory situation but the speaker's need for satisfaction of desire.

Visual images provide the means of expression, as, for example, kisses and words of tenderness he wants to say to her:

. . . rompiendo la clausura
en que los tuve largo tiempo presos . . . (p. 119)

The feeling of being blocked from reaching a goal is given form in the image, with its feeling of imprisonment, "clausura, presos." The feeling of distance expressed by the title is thus maintained, although in this image the distance is not in time but physical distance or impediment. It is the feeling of distance, whether of time or space, that communicates the poet's essential state of mind, his

being separated from a keenly felt goal. This particular image embodies a sense of release of pent up emotions; such release is not accomplished in the poem, however; it is left unresolved. The technique is Najera's customary one of fusion of tangible qualities with intangible qualities to communicate a sensation common to both, in this case release from restriction and inhibition which impede natural freedom of action and expression.

In the last stanza, personification and visual image are used to establish the final effect:

¿Cuándo la azul y tímida mañana,
al vernos juntos y encontrarte mía,
se detendrá temblando en la ventana
diciéndonos:--¡Amaos todavía! . . . ? (p. 119)

The personification of morning is particularly apt to capture the atmosphere of fragility and delicacy associated with the object of desire, the moment of fulfillment. Posed in the form of questions, the poem leads up to the final image, also in interrogative form, focusing the reader's attention forward in time and place to something anticipated, heightening the effect of postponed satisfaction, of distance between the poet and his ideal. The image of lovers at morning concentrates the poem's central feeling of anticipation into the final image.

The morning is described as "azul . . . tímida . . . temblando," leaving an impression of purity and refined feeling appropriate to an experience which will be the

culmination of much patient endurance. From such impressions of emotions refined to a pure essence is derived the stately dignity which sets the tone of the best poems of this period. The final impression which the image conveys to the reader is again the result of a fusion of qualities which captures the essence of experience and feeling: the visual image of the morning, the precise choice of words which convey not only a particular meaning but also suggest the fundamental quality of the image (e.g. "temblando") and the range of emotions--tenderness, surprise, pleasure--contained in the exclamation "¡Amaos todavía!"

The experience of awakening is also fundamental to Nájera's central theme of realization of full experience or an ideal. Awakening is an experience which opens formerly dormant senses to experience; it is one type of realization of potential. The need to open, to awaken senses to full capabilities, lies at the heart of Nájera's basic theme.

Mastery of both emotion and technique characterizes the poems which may be termed elegiac. These are poems in which a maturity of emotion has been reached; the conflicts of "Monólogo del incrédulo" are spent or at least under control, replaced by a calm resignation. A feeling of peace supersedes the trauma of doubt. This is not to say that satisfaction has replaced desire; nor has the speaker

given up and become embittered. Rather, he is reconciled to enduring a faulty world until either escape or fulfillment can be found. Serenity, peace of mind, not smug contentment, form the dominant tone of these poems.

One of the best examples of Nájera's ability to subject intense feeling to firm control is "Para entonces" (II, p. 129). In this poem a sense of strength is all-important. A statement by a first-person, disembodied speaker anticipating disillusionment with life and inviting death, the poem nevertheless is neither a whimper nor a lamentation, but a serene assertion declaring mastery over life. Although full consummation of desire may not have been realized, the poet is in full possession of his emotions and is ready to discard life and the inevitable pain which its unfulfilled desires bring.

The title sets the tone of self-mastery by establishing a distance between the poet and the moment of death. It is something viewed unemotionally, objectively. The use of "para" to designate a certain point of time distant from the speaker accomplishes the separation of the poet from "entonces," the moment of physical death. The connotation of "entonces" is rather open-ended, imparting an incomplete, unknown quality, a slightly questioning tone, implying that even this experience may not be complete or final. The title thus leaves the reader with a sense of anticipation of the unknown, of a time and experience not yet fully comprehended, a feeling which is carried through

the imagery of the poem in the image of the open, unending sea.

The distance thus firmly established in the title contributes to the tone of stately dignity derived from the feeling of intensity under control which produces the strength upon which is based the mood of the poem. The dignified tone continues in the opening stanza:

Quiero morir cuando decline el día,
en alta mar y con la cara al cielo;
donde parezca sueño la agonía,
y el alma, un ave que remonta el vuelo. (p. 129)

The rhythm and meter of the language is the aspect which first attracts the reader's attention and establishes the poetic tone. Appropriate to the elegiac feeling of the poem, the rhythm is slow, stately, measured; the entire poem is constructed with four stanzas, each with four lines of eleven syllables. A very regular meter is the result, conveying an impression of proportion and balance.

The rhythm of the first line reinforces the dominant tone. It is a simple statement of very deep feelings set into a measured, slow moving line which draws the reader's sensibilities into the speaker's mind with the first two words, then draws him into the dominant feeling of the poem with the seemingly simple phrase "cuando decline el día." An attitude of calm is created by the simple, regular beat of the rhythm, which proceeds in a straight line from the first word of the line to the last, with the measured,

unvarying step of a slow processional march, rather like a solemn funeral procession. The gravity inherent in this funeral-like meter is prevented from becoming lugubrious by the light, luminous quality of the language, the attitude of resignation without defeat. The tone thus established in the meter of the opening line continues to the end of the poem in the same dignified language.

As is customary with Nájera, the meaning is communicated by means of a visual image.³ Sunset establishes the feeling of the image: "cuando decline el día." A sunset creates an atmosphere of rest, of the emotions and conflicts of the day nearing resolution in a flood of beautiful light. There is a timeless quality to this feeling, in which individual troubles and even individual identity are submerged in a feeling of universal peace. Such dispersal of individual, worldly preoccupations is exactly the emotion dominating the speaker's own state of mind; death becomes a form of union with universal existence. Individual pain will be soothed by fusion with a larger reality: "donde parezca sueño la agonía." Individual consciousness is lost in the sea. The physical sensations inherent in a death in the sea at sunset are central to the state of mind communicated in the poem, that of being freed from ordinary constraints and being carried away into an unknown but keenly anticipated spiritual experience. The reader is not really conscious of physical death as such,

although that is what is being described in the poem; he is led to look beyond death to an anticipation of spiritual regeneration.

A profound loneliness pervades the second stanza, but it is not a melancholy or depressing feeling:

No escuchar en los últimos instantes,
ya con el cielo y con el mar a solas,
más voces ni plegarias sollozantes
que el majestuoso tumbo de las olas. (p. 129)

By continuing the grammatical structure of the first stanza, with an infinitive expressing the speaker's thoughts, a sense of continuity is maintained, resulting almost in a stream of consciousness thought pattern by the speaker; the poem becomes an interior monologue in miniature.

The speaker's loneliness is that of a man who has overcome his need for human contact and is thus able to open himself to larger experience. A sense of escape is obvious in the first line; the negative verb separates the speaker from previous, imperfect experience. The phrase "últimos instantes" gives a sense of closing one phase of experience. "A solas" is the poet's preferred state of being, absorbed into the universal reality of nature. The feeling of moving from one place of reality to a higher one is completed in the last two lines; the speaker consciously and finally makes his break with the carping voices of the human world and expresses his desire for a condition which is "majestuoso" rather than "sollozante."

The basic image of the poem is constructed around a sensation of light, culminating in the third stanza:

Morir cuando la luz, triste, retira
sus áureas redes de la onda verde,
y ser como ese sol que lento expira:
algo muy luminoso que se pierde. (p. 129)

Light is equated with life. The sunset, the dying of day, by extinguishing the daylight is extinguishing the life of the day. This visual image of dying light works both to establish the feeling and tone of the poem and to express the speaker's interior feeling of escape from previous experience. Thus a central visual image operates both on an immediate level, setting the mood of the poem, and on a more interior level, expressing the speaker's innermost feelings.

The sense of light in this stanza quite specifically equates the speaker's spirit with the dying day; death and light are inextricably bound together by the first lines. The image of light withdrawing from the waves heightens the sense of the closing of one experience with explicit finality. The speaker involves himself in this action in the coupling of the verbs "Morir . . . y ser" The first person "Quiero" which opens the poem establishes the speaker as the subject of the infinitives which open each succeeding stanza, yet the use of the infinitive form separates the speaker somewhat from the action and establishes distance which allows him to consider the subject of his own

death with objectivity. Even in this stanza, in which he is equating himself with the dying light, the poet never allows an overly personal feeling to intrude, and maintains the classical, detached tone of the poem.

The best line of this stanza epitomizes the poet's state of mind, fusing the image of the poem and the speaker's identification with it into a complete new impression. Life, individual identity, with its attendant pain, is simply "algo muy luminoso que se pierde." Both the slow progression of the poem's meter and its visual image of light lead up to and come to rest on the verb "se pierde," which is the final, irreversible culmination of the meter, the image, and the speaker's expressed state of mind.

With the poem's climax thus reached in the next to last stanza, the ending becomes a type of denouement, summing up or restating in final form the idea which has been developed. Grammatically linked with the preceeding stanza by the infinitive "morir," a new element is introduced to complete the poet's expressed attitude. That element is youth--to die, but while in the full vigor of one's life, with sensibilities keen and sure:

Morir, y joven: antes que destruya
el tiempo aleve la gentil corona;
cuando la vida dice aún: soy tuya,
aunque sepamos bien que nos traiciona! (p. 129)

To die while young is to die in full possession of one's faculties, and never know the indignity of being rendered

unable to think and feel to the fullest degree. The poet, then, must at all costs meet life as an equal, undefeated. It is in this basic meaning of the poem, to be absorbed into universal reality undefeated by worldly imperfections, that we see Najera's central poetic theme emerging. The poet of "Para entonces" is undefeated, spurning life and facing death with dignity and grace.

A group from this period which may be termed poems of **disillusionment** are "Ondas muertas," (1887); "Mariposas," (1887); and "Mis enlutadas" (1890). These works express disillusionment with life, lightened by a luminous lyric quality and characterized by a calm, dignified resignation which keeps firm reins on the emotions expressed.

"Ondas muertas" compares the poet's emotions to currents of underground, or "dead" water which never experience the light of day. The poem is built around the symbolism of water, comparing the beauty of rivers, fountains, and the sea with the misery of the dead water which represents the soul. Seven stanzas comparing various states of water comprise the poem. The first sets the dark tone of the poem by describing the underground stream:

En la sombra debajo de tierra
donde nunca llegó la mirada,
se deslizan en curso infinito
silenciosas corrientes de agua. (p. 131)

These waters live a melancholy existence ("sombra, silenciosas") characterized by absence of light and "a perpetuo

correr condenadas." The feeling conveyed by this last line is one of hopeless, frenzied movement, searching for rest or purpose but finding neither, an excellent evocation of the state of hopelessness which the speaker is ascribing to himself. The symbolism of light equals life which we see in "Para entonces" also operates here.

A contrast is drawn in the second stanza with the above ground water of rivers, which exist in a much happier state and suggest happiness in life; reflecting the light of stars and dawn, they:

. . . tienen cendales de flores,
 en su seno las ninfas se bañan,
 fertilizan los fértiles valles,
 y sus ondas son de agua que canta. (p. 132)

The emphasis here is on a contrast with the unhappy existence below ground, away from the light; the rivers are characterized by "flores, ninfas," and spread life in their path "fecundizan," and pleasure, "agua que canta."

Also contrasting with the underground are fountains, described in the third stanza in a lovely passage of pastoral beauty which could easily be mistaken for a superficial exercise in elegance had the symbolic connection with the poet's state of mind not been established:

. . . ya cual flecha bruñida se eleva,
 ya en abierto abanico se alza,
 de diamantes salpica las hojas
 o se duerme cantando en voz baja. (p. 132)

The rhythm is rather like the flowing of water itself, coursing in regular stream from line to line unimpeded by

irregularities in the meter, lending an atmosphere of easy grace to the poem; this feeling of grace is essential to the control which is central to the tone of these poems.

In the last stanzas a contrast is made once again between these living waters and the dead ones:

¡Cuán distinta la negra corriente
a perpetua prisión condenada . . .
esa muda que nadie conoce,
esa ciega que tienen esclava! (p. 132)

The emphasis is on the lack of freedom and inability to communicate which characterize the water's condition. This sad condition also alludes to Najera's preoccupation with fulfillment, his constant sense of being locked in an imperfect state: "perpetua prisión . . . ciega . . . esclava."

The connection is then rather obviously drawn between the water's condition and the speaker's own:

Como ella, de nadie sabidas, . . .
sois vosotras también, las oscuras
silenciosas corrientes de mi alma. (p. 133)

The condition common to the water and to his soul is the inability to break out of a restrictive state and reach out for full realization and awareness, a state of mind very well evoked by the image of dead, hidden water.

The poem then closes with the speaker's conclusions on his own need to control his emotions; attempts to reach out would end in failure and disillusionment. He addresses his emotions directly, maintaining a sense of objective distance between himself and them:

Y si paso os abrieran, saldríais,
como chorro bullente de agua . . . (p. 133)

A very conscious need for self control thus underlies the sense of self mastery which forms such an important element in Nájera's best poems. The conditional sentence conveys the speaker's awareness of two separate, distinct states, control and release, and the constant awareness he feels of the need to exercise choice over them. The words "chorro bullente" link the quality of the water with the quality of emotions or state of mind of the speaker. The speaker expresses deep pessimism about the chances for improvement:

! . . . seguid siempre rodando en la sombra,
silenciosas corrientes del alma! (p. 133)

The verb form "seguid rodando" captures the feeling of hopeless, endless agitation and seeking which is suffered by the water and the speaker alike. The use of "seguid" in a present perfect context captures not only a feeling of stressed movement, but also of continual, exhausting movement.

A similar state of mind finds expression in more lyric form in "Mariposas," which conveys the poet's feeling of frustration at the denial of full realization of experience. The symbolism is put into the form of butterflies which whirl about, then disappear, suggesting the elusive quality of human feelings, which never attain long lasting fulfillment.

The outstanding characteristic of this poem is its lyricism, realized by a perfect fusion of imagery and rhythm of language. Seven short stanzas comprise the poem, each expressing some quality of the butterflies which contributes to the basic equation of butterflies as equivalents of human experiences. Color and rhythm establish the lyric quality of the poem in the opening lines:

Ora blancas cual copos de nieve,
 ora negras, azules o rojas,
 en miradas esmaltan el aire
 y en los pétalos frescos retozan. (p. 135)

The rhythm of these lines is fast-moving, flowing unchecked from word to word and line to line, coming to temporary stops on the words expressing color; the repetition of the word "ora" in the first two lines establishes the feeling of movement, of energy, and prevents the meter from stressing any one color above the others, imparting a shimmering, kaleidoscopic effect to the butterflies' movement. The vocabulary also contributes to the total effect of lightness and swift-moving grace. The words "mudas, esmaltan, retozan" create an image of an electric movement, pulsing with energy. The rest of the stanza continues this feeling:

Una chispa de luz les da vida
 y una gota al caer las ahoga;
 aparecen al claro del día,
 y ya muertas las halla la sombra. (p. 135)

The atmosphere created in these lines is one of illusory, short-lived existence, created by comparing the butterflies to sparks, associating the qualities of one with the other,

and by picturing the fragility of the butterflies through imagery of physical vulnerability "una gota al caer . . ." and vulnerability to time. Life, whether of the butterflies or of the poet, bursts into bloom, but disappears before its beauty can be realized.

Delicacy and mystery surround these sparks of life:

Nacen, aman, y brillan y mueren . . .
y se van, sin dejarnos su huella,
cual de tenue llovizna las gotas. (p. 136)

The swift progression of verbs re-creates the swiftly passing life of the butterflies. The rhythm of lines builds momentum and comes to rest on "se van," returning to the basic quality of these creatures, elusiveness. The comparison to "tenue llovizna" suggests something which can be seen, and sensed, and experienced, yet never captured completely or understood. Further along in the poem, in the fourth stanza, the connection is drawn between the butterflies and illusions:

¿Quién conoce en que sitio os perdistes,
ilusiones que sois mariposas? (p. 136)

The words "perdistes, ilusiones" sum up the attributes of the butterflies. The qualities given form in them--beauty, fragility, illusiveness--are thus applied to human experience.

The colors so far applied to the butterflies--red, white, blue--are light, positive, possessing an energy and vibrancy of their own. In the last three stanzas, the colors are used to complete the imagery of the butterflies

and to establish the connection between them and the human experience which they suggest. Still with the rapid, easily flowing rhythm used throughout the poem, in the fifth stanza the poet addresses the white butterfly:

Tú, la blanca, ¿por qué ya no vienes?
 ¿No eras fresco azahar de mi novia?
 . . . eras casta, creyente, sencilla . . . (pp.
 136-137)

The insects darting about the speaker in an array of color and energy are now suggesting personal experience; the qualities they incorporate become linked to qualities of personal life, expressed by color. The white one suggests purity, a standard equation, but here linked to a specific feeling of the poet, a past happiness; the imperfect verb "eras" makes a contrast between the happy whiteness of the poet's past experience, suggesting present unhappiness. The adjective "creyente" expands the implication of purity to include a feeling of genuineness, of sincerity and purity of mind. The white butterfly is linked in the speaker's mind with his wedding night, a time of happiness and fulfillment, a happiness now apparently lost, as the poem continues in the sixth stanza: "Ya no viene la blanca, la buena"

The positive qualities suggested by the other colors of the butterflies are also escaping the speaker; red symbolizing fullness of life: " . . . la roja, la que en sangre teñí, beso vivo," and blue, symbolizing poetry: " . . . Ni la azul que me dijo: ¡poeta!" These are rather

conventional uses of these colors, but they take on added meaning when linked with the symbolism of the poem and, by extension, to the central concerns of Nájera's poetry.

In the last stanza, night has replaced day, black has replaced color, disillusionment has replaced hope:

Encended ese cirio amarillo . . .
Ya vendrán . . . las que tienen las alas muy negras.
y se acercan en funebre ronda. (p. 137)

The visual change from day to night symbolizes the change which has taken place in the speaker's state of mind, which is suggested also by the word "fúnebre."

Another poem which expresses disillusionment with life is "Mis enlutadas," (p. 161). This poem differs considerably from "Mariposas" and "Ondas muertas" in its mood of depression and pessimism. The lyrical atmosphere is used in "Mariposas" to convey a mood of plastic beauty. It is employed in "Mis enlutadas" to give the poem an almost morbid tone.

Composed of sixteen five-line stanzas of regular metrical pattern, the poem's rhythm and line placement contribute measurably to the total effect. Each stanza contains two lines of eleven syllables, alternated in regular patterns of shorter lines of five to eight syllables. The rhythm of the lines, irregular and rather choppy, combined with the alternation of length, creates a feeling of agitation and unease quite distinct from the stately calm of "Para entonces" or the fluid melodiousness of

"Mariposas." The result is a carefully controlled nervousness, emotion under stress:

Descienden taciturnas las tristezas
al fondo de mi alma,
y entumecidas, haraposas brujas,
con uñas negras
mi vida escarban. (p. 161)

The "enlutadas" are the poet's "tristezas": sadness or disappointments. The mood conveyed by the image of the opening stanza blends closely with the mood of the language. The poet suffers a deep inner disquiet, emotional turmoil. The vocabulary of the stanza is chosen with precision to express unease: "entumecidas, brujas, escarban." The nervous, uneven rhythm combines with the image to create the total effect.

A closer description of the "enlutadas" is provided by the second stanza:

De sangre es el color de sus pupilas,
de nieve son sus lágrimas;
hondo pavor infunden . . . Yo las amo
por ser las solas
que me acompañan. (p. 161)

An altogether disagreeable quality surrounds these harpies, suggesting utter torment. The color blood red naturally agitates one's sensibilities; the tears of "nieve" suggest an inhuman lack of warmth. The word "pavor" and the rhythm of the phrase "hondo pavor infunden" create an impression of stark, unrelieved fear.

The bulk of the poem's stanzas are concerned with description of the torment the speaker suffers at the hands of the "enlutadas," and his ambivalent attitude toward them:

Aguárdolas ansioso, si el trabajo
 de ellas me separa,
 y búscolas en medio del bullicio,
 y son constantes
 y nunca tardan. (p. 161)

The poet is too preoccupied by his depression to really want them to go away; indeed, they are inseparable, in reality an extension of his own state of mind. The speaker seems to take rather masochistic pleasure in preoccupation with his troubles, as they surround him and sing "lentas salmodias." The creatures (his own emotions) force him to look into himself, become aware of his own being, and face his own imperfections. They delve into his soul and uncover "Todas mis culpas/todas mis faltas." Then, in the tenth stanza immediately following:

Y hurgando mudas, como hambrientas lobas
 las encuentran, las sacan . . .
 y volviendo a mi lecho mortuorio
 me las enseñan
 y dicen: habla. (p. 163)

This stanza is particularly effective. The image operates both visually with the description of the creatures like "hambrientas lobas" and, more importantly, dramatically as well. In essence, the poet's state of mind is acted out in the scene in which the harpies present him with his sorrows and demand some form of expression. He reacts violently to them, referring to them as "pescadoras de lágrimas," and lashes out against them: "revuelvo contra ellas / y las muerdo con rabia."

His anger, though, recedes, and is replaced by a feeling almost of gratitude toward what are, after all, his own emotions:

¿Qué culpa tienen, pobres hijas mías,
si yo las hice
con sangre y alma? (p. 163, stanza 13)

The feeling of dramatic intensity created in the stanzas which describe the poet's internal conflict relaxes with these lines, replaced by a sense of resolution. The last three stanzas are dominated by the feeling of conflict resolved, and are addressed directly to the "enlutadas" by the speaker. He accepts them; they are the fundamental fact of his life:

. . . venid, mis enlutadas
las que viajáis por la infinita sombra,
donde está todo
lo que se ama. (p. 164)

Melancholy does not necessarily defeat one; the speaker in this case emerges stronger. A sense of self-realization, almost of self-satisfaction, dominates the closing stanza:

Venid y habladme de las cosas idas
de las tumbas que callan,
de muertos buenos y de ingratos vivos . . .
Voy con vosotras,
vamos a casa. (p. 164)

The structure of the stanzas used in this poem brings each stanza to rest with two short lines, each the end of a sentence, creating a sense of resolution. The entire poem ends with resolution, with a sense of having overcome "muertos buenos" and "ingratos vivos." The poet remains

undefeated, accompanied by his emotional turmoil, with a determined, rather defiant attitude.

A poem which is concerned with the same basic state of mind as "Ondas muertas," "Mariposas," and "Mis enlutadas," the inability to experience full potential of human sensation, is "La serenata de Schubert" (II, p. 203). This poem uses as a setting the poet's stream of thoughts recalled by listening to the musical strains of Schubert's "Serenade." The result is a type of stream of consciousness, a monologue which reveals the poet's state of mind. Nostalgia is the dominant mood of this poem, differing from the others in that it looks back to the past in its desire for fulfillment rather than to some hoped for ideal.

A rather long poem, "La serenata de Schubert" is composed of twenty-four stanzas of irregular length, mostly of four lines but with some of six lines. As befits a monologue, the structure and meter are rather prosaic, with each stanza becoming a sort of paragraph division of the overall monologue. The lines are of almost unvarying length, averaging eleven syllables. The rhythm of the language is prosaic, with an even, smooth, plain rhythmic line with no pronounced rhythmic variation. The result is a poem in which the reader is taken into the speaker's train of thought and thus sees the situation from the speaker's point of view and in a sense relives the experience with him. The poetic effect thus stems from the emotions,

thoughts and images which pass through the narrator's mind, communicating his state of mind. Musicality, of course, as suggested by the title, sets the mood of the poem and establishes its dominant character: "El poeta, ante todo, se propuso imitar en su composición el ritmo de la música y, además, evocar a través de sus estrofas el sentimiento que crea la música al escucharse."⁴

The opening lines are the speaker's reaction to the music, making the initial link between the music and the speaker's memories. He then expresses the music's effect on his thoughts: "Así hablara mi alma . . . si pudiera!" (p. 203). This conditional sentence expresses the speaker's dilemma: if only he could give vent to his emotions. The poem is a bit repetitious, reiterating this basic thought in several ways. Images flash through the speaker's mind: "¡Cuántos cisnes jugando en la laguna!" (p. 204), an image of perfect beauty separated from the ordinary world. The color blue is linked with this idea of perfection: "¡Qué azules brincan las traviesas olas! . . ." (p. 204). The color silver also expresses the basic feeling of perfect beauty:

En las ondas de plata . . .
va flotando la tierna serenata. (p. 204)

The qualities which the music expresses suggest to him the quality of his feelings:

Hay ternura y dolor en ese canto,
y tiene esa amorosa despedida
la transparencia nítida del llanto
y la inmensa tristeza de la vida. (p. 204)

That grief is not entirely negative is indicated by the word "ternura"; beauty and sadness are mixed. The experience of the music becomes associated with feelings the speaker needs to express: "ternura, dolor, tristeza." The music takes on a life of its own, expressing the speaker's own experience:

Parecen ilusiones que se alejan . . .
Sueños amantes que piedad imploran,
y como niños huérfanos, ¡se quejan! (p. 204)

The reference to "amantes" is the first reference to the memory which becomes the central emotion of the poem: the painful recollection of a beloved who has died. In this stanza, the pain of separation is only suggested: "niños huérfanos." Memories begin to collect and take form: ". . . surgen muchas cosas olvidadas." (p. 204). These take the form of snatches of past experience seen through a glow of nostalgia: "un peinador muy blanco . . . un volumen de versos . . . olor de rosas frescas." Scenes begin to take shape:

En torno al velador, niños jugando . . .
La anciana, que en silencio nos veía . . .
Schubert en tu piano sollozando,
y en mi libro, Musset con su "Lucía." (p. 205)

Scenes of the past which may have had no particular meaning in themselves now become bearers of a whole range of experience, connected to the present by the sound of the music of Schubert. The speaker's present situation contrasts painfully with the past scenes of happiness: "y todo ya muy lejos, todo ido" (p. 205). The speaker is

flooded with memories of the past which cannot be recapitulated: "Todo presente en mi memoria queda . . ." (p. 205). He then addresses the dead beloved directly, and the poem closes with his words to her:

Y te busco, cual antes te buscaba
y me parece oírte entre las flores . . .
Y nada existe ya! Callo el piano . . .
me dijiste también: --¡hasta mañana! (p. 206)

The happiness he knew with her has faded into simply a memory, an elusive phantasm. There is a haunting quality about these lines which suggests an existence so weighted by the past as to be made meaningless for the present. The closing stanza repeats the theme of the poem:

Ya nunca volveréis, noches de plata,
ni unirán en mi alma su armonía . . . (p. 206)

The word "armonía" sums up the poet's feeling of lack of balance, of life which lacks completeness.

Nájera's masterpiece, or at least the poem which best represents the attitude of resolution of conflict which characterizes his best work, is "Pax animae" (II, p. 223). The Latin title best expresses the basic attitude behind all the poems which may be described as elegiac; "peace of mind" would probably be the best English equivalent, since it sums up the mood of the poem quite well.⁵ One of Nájera's longest poems, "Pax animae" is composed of twenty-four four line stanzas of eleven syllables, the same basic structure as "Para entonces," and the result is much the same: a stately, very dignified meter with subtle, understated rhythm creating

a feeling of emotion under firm control. The poem is actually repetitious in theme, repeating the same attitude or idea in several ways, but Nájera's control is so firm that the repetition does not weaken the effect; rhythm and image combine to create and maintain the tone, thus controlling the total effect.

A first person speaker narrates the poem as a sort of apostrophe addressed to poets as a generic group, philosophizing about life and the poets' part in it:

Ni una palabra de dolor blasfemo!
 Sé altivo, sé gallardo en la caída,
 ¡y ve, poeta, con desdén supremo
 todas las injusticias de la vida! (p. 223)

The poet is seen as a noble being overcoming, rising above the pain and imperfection of life. The words "dolor, caída, injusticias" sum up the speaker's attitude toward life. The poet must be one who triumphs, with "desdén supremo." This attitude, of course, represents Nájera's own attitude as seen in the poems of this period. The speaker in this poem goes on to say that a poet's function in life is, by drawing upon his own sorrows, to build "excelsos monumentos sepulcrales." Poetry is then a work which gives form to life's experiences.

En mármol blanco tus estatuas labra
 castas en la actitud, aunque desnudas . . . (p. 223)

The attitude toward poetry shown here sets it far apart from ordinary experience, and stresses poetry as the embodiment of life's mystery. Such an attitude is an aspect of

Nájera's central theme of unattainability. Poetry holds the key, but does not reveal what it knows: (" . . . duerma en sus labios . . . pero mudas!". Poetry then becomes man's avenue of approach to a higher, ideal reality, which can be sensed by him but never completely known.

The permanance of poetry is contrasted with the ephemeral quality of human individuality:

¡El nombre! . . . ¡Débil vibración sonora
que dura apenas un instante! ¡El nombre! . . .
¡Ultima y triste vanidad del hombre! (p. 224)

These lines also express an idea central to Nájera's poetry, the preoccupation with fleeting human experience and the need to find something of more substance, which is of course poetry. Man need not look to other men for consolation:

¡Duermen los ecos en la selva umbría
y nadie, nadie a nuestra voz responde! (p. 224)

Human experience is simply lost, an idea expressed beautifully in the image of echos which "duermen." The word "umbría" suggests the quality of human life, sad and with little substance.

Memory and escape become the only recourse which remains found through poetry:

En esta vida el único consuelo
es acordarse de las horas bellas . . . (p. 224)

This attitude expresses the feeling of nostalgia which forms the base of much of Nájera's poetry, as a source of "consuelo," which is a central concern of his poetry. Escape is the other basic means of consolation:

Huir del mar y en el dormido lago
disfrutar de las ondas el reposo . . . (p. 224)

The choice of words is, as in all successful Nájera poems, a principal factor in the effect. The mood is created by such words as "dormido, reposo," expressing the speaker's desire for relief from the world's conflict. The verb "huir" situates the speaker in this situation; he wants to move from one situation, "el mar," here meaning the sea of human conflicts, to "el dormido lago," a quiet place of rest. The verb "disfrutar," continues the movement begun by "huir" and brings it to a logical conclusion, fulfillment of the speaker's need for rest. The stanza continues with two other infinitives set into the same context.

Dormir . . . soñar . . . El Sueño, nuestro mago,
es un sublime y santo mentiroso. (p. 224)

Rest and escape, then, are the speaker's overriding desires. The word "mago" imparts an air of unreality to the lines, as if the speaker has broken with everyday reality and is seeking something more real. But the word "mentiroso" brings the train of thought back down to earth, and re-establishes the basically pessimistic outlook.

A basic feeling or attitude which underlies much of Nájera's poetry is expressed in the next stanza:

. . . ¡perdona el mal que te hayan hecho!
¡Todos están enfermos de la vida! (p. 224)

A profound sense of tiredness, almost of exhaustion permeates the poem, as it does, to one degree or another, all the poems

of this type. The generic poet to whom "Pax animae" is addressed is advised to hold himself above the baser emotions that such an attitude might produce and to hold himself above the crowd:

Acaso esos instintos heredaron . . .
acumulando todos los rencores. (p. 225)

These lines gain in effect with a strong feeling of a sense of the mystery of experience, of man not understanding. Again, precise choice of vocabulary conveys emotion and mood: "heredaron, acumulando."

The answer, then, is to find strength through suffering, not be defeated by it:

¿Padeces? Busca a la gentil amante . . .
y ve apoyado, como Lear errante,
en tu joven Cordelia; la tristeza. (p. 225)

Just as Lear emerges with a sense of essential dignity unimpaired in the midst of abasement, so it is the function of the poet to maintain man's innate human dignity and sustain it through poetry.

A visual image similar to "Para entonces" is then used to illustrate the speaker's sense of ephemeral human experience and his need for rest:

Mira; se aleja perezoso el día . . .
el agua es virgen, el ambiente puro. (p. 226)

The image of declining light creates the same effect of serenity and peace as in "Para entonces." The verb "se aleja" combined with the adjective "perezosa" creates the feeling of languid, restful movement, leading up to a mood

of tranquility; man needs a haven of rest, an "ambiente puro," uncontaminated by worldly troubles. The adjectives "virgen, puro" sum up the essence of the type of haven desired by the speaker, an ideal place where man can be restored to an ideal state of innocence and faultlessness.

The image of evening continues; the dying light seems to say, "ya duérmete . . . no llores!", soothing human pain. The ideal is to experience life to the fullest, then retire to a peaceful, Nirvana-like state:

Recordar . . . Perdonar . . . Haber amado . . .
 Ser dichoso un instante, haber creído . . .
 Y luego . . . reclinarse fatigado
 en el hombro de nieve del olvido. (p. 226)

The use of infinitives detaches these emotions from personal experience and elevates the actions expressed to a universal place. "Recordar" is the first function of the poet (and poetry), to know life's experiences. "Perdonar" is an essential part of a poet's attitude; he must rise above the ordinary. The use of the perfect infinitives--"haber amado" and "haber creído"--situates these positive emotions well into the past, assuring a detached, not too emotional poetry. With the crisis, one might even say trauma, of life thus worked out and overcome, one can then find peace.

The poem closes with a visual image which acts as a recapitulation of the poem's basic mood and attitude:

Cuando el dolor mi espíritu sombrea
 busco en las cimas claridad y calma,
 ¡y una infinita compasión albea
 en las heladas cumbres de mi alma! (p. 227)

The poem's narrator closes with a statement of the resolution of his emotional turmoil, expressed through the image of finding clarity and calm in a high, sequestered place away from the heat of life. The feeling created is one of a high mountaintop, uncontaminated by the world below. This feeling operates also on a spiritual plane; the poet must struggle to inhabit an atmosphere more rarefied than ordinary mortal life. The emphasis on coolness, in the word "heladas," (as in the line quoted earlier, " . . . el hombro de nieve del olvido,") creates a soothing effect, as of burning emotions calmed and healed. An atmosphere, whether physical or mental, which is cool and pure is one free from the tumult of imperfect life.

This poem succeeds not through visual imagery, but through creation of mood, by means of the exact choice of the precise words needed to communicate the desired state of mind. The meter of the poem sets the basic mood of stately quiet; within this mood an unidentified poet speaks, revealing the essence of poetry from his point of view, using visual imagery only to illustrate or reinforce a feeling already established, as in the image of dying light. It would seem safe to assume that the poet speaking is communicating Nájera's own view of the subject, treating as he does the central themes of Nájera's poetry: overcoming an imperfect, fleeting life in which we find little fulfillment. The word "compasión" expresses better than any

other the final state of mind or attitude which underlies Nájera's poetry. A profound sensitivity to life results in a deep spiritual crisis triggered by an unwillingness to accept life's failings; the overcoming of this crisis results in a profound compassion for human suffering, and in peace of mind at having, so to speak, weathered the storm. The poem thus succeeds both as poetry and as poetic philosophy.

The poem which ends the discussion of this group of poems, "Non omnis moriar," (II, p. 301) in a sense, comes full circle from the first one, "Para entonces." "Para entonces" expresses the wish to die, to overcome life by escaping from it. "Non omnis moriar" in a way shows the other side of the coin, the desire for a spark of immortality to remain even after death:

No moriré del todo, amiga mía!
de mi ondulante espíritu disperso,
algo en la urna diáfana del verso
piadosa guardará la poesía. (p. 301)

Put, like many of Nájera's poems, into the form of a monologue by a first person speaker addressing some unidentified person, the poem opens with a declaration of the immortality of the poet through poetry. The nine stanzas are all the same four line structure of eleven syllables, the understated meter of "Para entonces" and "Pax animae" which Nájera seems to prefer for poems which reveal a subjective state of mind and depend upon the mood and

feelings expressed for their poetic effect. Precise choice of vocabulary fitted into a well-controlled metrical scheme, then fitted into the basic feeling being expressed by the poem's narrator, is the poetic technique. The words "ondulante espíritu disperso" capture the essence of the speaker's feeling about himself. His soul is "ondulante," not stagnant and lifeless, yet it is "disperso," freed from the constraints of earthly form. Poetry becomes almost religious--"piadosa"--guarding something sacred, that is the spark of life. Poetry preserves life's experience, preserving it for communication to others:

Hondos recuerdos de fugaces días,
ternezas tristes que suspiran solas; (p. 301)

The key word is "fugaces"; life is fleeting, only poetry can detain or conserve it.

Even poetry, however, cannot express man's full experience:

. . . dirás de mi errabunda poesía:
era triste, vulgar lo que cantaba . . .
¡mas, que canción tan bella la que oía! (p. 302)

The speaker draws an interesting contrast between poetry as an ideal and poetry as a personal expression; the word "errabunda" imparts an ephemeral quality even to poetry. Inadequacy characterizes even man's highest expression; it is "triste, vulgar." The implication of the last line is that a poet's interior feeling can be only partially expressed in even the best poetry.

The speaker states that his poetry will raise "en tu recuerdo notas/del coro universal . . ." (p. 302). The sense of being as a part of a universal unity, in which the individual is only a spark, which is evident in Nájera's work, finds expression in this line. The view of death which underlies this attitude, which appears also in "Para entonces" and "Pax animae," is almost an oriental view of death as a dispersal of individual life and a return to a Nirvana-like union with universal elements.

The last stanza recapitulates the speaker's attitude:

porque existe la Santa Poesía
y en ella irradas tú, mientras disperso
átomo de mi ser esconda el verso,
no moriré del todo, amiga mía! (p. 302)

Poetry thus becomes a spark of life preserving the essence of the poet's life, and thus of universal human life. The phrase "disperso átomo de mi ser" sums up the fate of human life, "disperso" again imparts an ephemeral, fragile quality. The word "átomo" is particularly effective in capturing the fleeting quality which prevents realization of individual life.

One must appreciate the intense emotions which lie at the heart of Nájera's poetry to understand these poems fully.⁶ Although most of the poems which may be termed masterpieces were written in 1887 or after, it is a maturity of emotion which characterizes them, not a maturity gained by years. Said another way, the mature poems are those which

fuse emotional and technical control. Precision and control, both of language and emotion, are the key words to describe Nájera's mature poetic achievement.

Once Nájera has achieved full control over his intense emotions and his virtuoso skill with language, the result is a limpid, intense poetry which communicates emotional states with great clarity. It is not a poetry of great originality of thought; if one does not appreciate the emotional struggle underlying his full poetic work, the poetry may even seem superficial; the underlying strength of the work must be understood. There is sadness and melancholy pervading the work, to be sure, but it is not a melancholy arising from weakness or defeat. Rather, it is a melancholy accompanied by a granite will to endure, to keep the flame of desire burning until it can be satisfied. The fiery desire which permeates Nájera's poetry is not an erratic, easily extinguished one, but steady and fierce. This is not effeminate poetry. The best poetry is masculine in the finest sense of the word--strong, vigorous, yet lightened by a graceful, lyric touch which prevents crudity. An air of calm, manly dignity graces these poems imparting to them a classical sense of form and proportion.

CHAPTER V

THE LIGHTER POEMS

No consideration of the poetry of Gutiérrez Nájera would be complete without some attention to the lighter humorous and lyric poems which form a small but significant segment of his work. The basic emotional strength and stability which is revealed in Nájera's work is evident in the light poems. These poems reveal another side of the intense emotion and linguistic skills which are the salient traits of Nájera's poetry. The sincerity and depth of emotion of such poems as "Para entonces", or the pessimistic preoccupation with the futility of life seen in "Mimí" or "Lápida", do not indicate a morbid, humorless, or self-righteous mentality. There is at all times in the best poetry of Nájera a certain sense of detachment from the very desires and emotions which provide the poetic impulse, a sense of self control and objectivity which prevents the lapse into the emotionalism and humorless sentimentality which is the constant danger with poetry of such intensity, and which does in fact detract from the less successful of his poems. It is precisely this detachment and ironic self-observation which underlies the satiric and lyric poems; thus they may be said to represent the less subjective, less emotional side of this body of poetic work. The self mastery and sense of detachment from individual turmoil which can

result in the noble cadences of "Pax animae" can also result in the pure lyricism of "De blanco" or the sharp barbs of "La duquesa Job."

"Portrait of the Poet With Tongue in Cheek" might serve as a subtitle of the delightful portrait of "La duquesa Job" (II, p. 19), Nájera's satiric masterpiece. The pseudonym of "El Duque Job" which Nájera employed in his journalistic career is itself satiric, suggesting an ambivalent attitude. The name "Job" of course suggests almost superhuman endurance of suffering, a biblical, epic hero, yet the title "duque" is suggestive of a foppish, rather elegant (and anything but superhuman) and superficial world of courtly conventions. The combination of the two into the same name thus is an incongruity which suggests something of a dual personality, or at least conflicting attitudes toward both worldly suffering and worldly elegance. Nájera apparently does not take either one overly seriously, a most healthy attitude.

The name of "Duquesa Job" is of course an extension of the pseudonym and of the same attitude. The figure of the "duquesa" in the poem is not so much an individual character as an embodiment of a way of life, a representative of those who aspire to, or are at least involved in, the fringes of the pseudo-elegant bourgeoisie of the late nineteenth century. Nájera was evidently quite familiar with

this way of life, and involved in it, but unsatisfied by it. "La duquesa Job" seems best read, then, as a satiric comment on the beautiful but unfulfilling life of worldly elegance. The many satiric references to such staples of the life of Mexico City as "el Jockey Club," "Madame Marnat," and so forth, reveal an intimate yet detached familiarity with this way of life.

Set into the form of a stylized monologue, as are most Nájera poems, the stylized detachment maintains the objective distance necessary for successful satire. The speaker is "el Duque" himself, although he refers to himself in the third person also, thus maintaining an even greater feeling of detachment. The result is an attitude of objective observation of and comment on the duke and duchess and the life they lead. The poem may thus, by extension, be read as a Nájera comment on his own life and surroundings; "la duquesa" may be seen to a certain extent as an extension of "el duque" himself and perhaps even a further alter ego of Nájera himself. The tone set by the detachment and sharp observation is one of a gossipy exchange of intimacies between speaker and reader.

The scene and situation are set in the first stanza, as well as the satiric tone:

En dulce charla de sobremesa,
mientras devoro fresa tras fresa
y abajo ronca tu perro Bob,
te haré el retrato de la duquesa
que adora a veces el duque Job. (p. 19)

Nájera's gift for rhythm once again serves him well here in an unobtrusive, lightly flowing meter which produces a feeling of lighthearted banter. The rhyme scheme also contributes to the same effect with its repetition of varying patterns of rhyming of such unlikely words as "fresa--duquesa" and "Bob--Job". The incongruity of these pairs of words produces much of the satiric effect.

Incongruity is the basic situation of the poem; the characters of the duke and duchess simply do not fit their elegant and effete surroundings. This incongruity is established in the first stanza with the vocabulary and the description of the duke. The word "ronca" certainly does not fit the elegant world of nobility. The duke is not very elegant in his eating habits: "devoro fresa tras fresa." The final touch is the phrase "a veces" referring to his affection for the duchess. His ambivalent attitude toward her and their elegant surroundings is evident here; it is not a serious love but a partial attraction.

The bulk of the poem consists of a satiric description of the girl, depending for its satiric effect on the discrepancy between the ideal and the reality, between the sophisticated world of elegant high style and the reality of the duchess with "pie de andaluza, "boca de guinda." The poem is sprinkled liberally with references to the contemporary furnishings of the stylish life: "los

gallos de Micólo," "el five o'clock," "Madam Marnat." All of these the duchess falls short of.

The duchess, however, has certain qualities which the speaker considers more important than these superficial appearances. She possesses a certain vivacity, a freshness and liveliness:

Agil, nerviosa, blanca, delgada . . .
y palpitante sobre la nuca
rizos tan rubios como el coñac. (p. 21)

The adjectives used to describe her all impute a *sense* of vigor, vitality and health, a natural beauty and not a cultivated one. This natural quality seems to be the quality which makes her so appealing. It is a quality which must be envied by more elegant society types:

Por ser tan joven y tan bonita,
cual mi sedosa, blanca gatita,
diera sus pajes la emperatriz. (p. 22)

The "duque" and "duquesa Job" may be said to be in, but not of, the posh world of the Jockey Club and the other centers of the social whirl he describes. The attitude of the poet displays an ability to see the world and himself in perspective, not to take it all too seriously. The distance thus attained allows for a more objective, possibly more profound understanding of the duke and duchess and their situation.

The closing stanza sums up the lighthearted vigor of the poet's attitude:

Desde las puertas de la Sorpresa
 hasta la esquina del Jockey Club,
 no hay espanola, yankee o francesa,
 ni mas bonita ni mas traviesa
 que la duquesa del duque Job! (p. 23)

Thus both the duchess and the elegant world she imitates are placed under the satiric scrutiny of the duke. She does not attain the upper class elegance which she imitates. But is it, after all, really worth attaining? A certain distance which has been established between the duke and duchess and the world of the Jockey Club, and between the duke and duchess themselves, and maintained throughout the poem, is maintained in the closing stanza. The references to the foreign "espanola, yankee o francesa" puts further distance between the socialite life and the writer. It should be remembered that Gutiérrez Nájera lived the greater part of his life during the French regime of Maximilian and the bourgeois dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz, periods dominated by superficiality and social climbing. While the poet can by no stretch of the imagination be considered a pre-revolutionary, there is in his work an intuition of the futility of this life style. This poem can thus be best read as a comment on the sham of much conventional life and those who aspire to it, whether they succeed or not. Nájera's sensitivity to this is apparent throughout his work, but is a part of far more profound realization of the inadequacy of human attempts at self-realization.

"Para un menú" (II, p. 173) is satire in a more impersonal, darker vein. The tone is not exactly bitter, yet it is totally pessimistic and resigned to unhappiness. The theme is love, or the lack of it: the inability to find lasting, meaningful relationships. The satiric effect here arises from the use of a menu to describe a human situation as profound and essential as love. The incongruity of applying to human love the idea of a menu, something which one uses for the mundane and selfish purpose of selecting momentary pleasures, produces a dehumanizing effect which strips away the layers of protective illusion so easily applied to this subject and displays the unlovely sight of human selfishness. The basic purpose of satire, to focus on various aspects of human weakness and lay bare human failings, is well served by this technique.

The basic comparison of love to a menu is maintained throughout the poem, with variations on the basic theme. The first stanza connects the idea of used-up love to the sensation of time, thus focusing on two of man's most basic feelings: love and the preoccupation with the passing of time:

Las novias pasadas son copas vacías;
 en ellas pusimos un poco de amor;
 el néctar tomamos . . . huyeron los días . . .
 ¡Traed otras copas con nuevo licor! (p. 173)

As can be seen in this stanza, the metrical scheme of the poem is simple and regular, consisting of four quatrains

rhyming ABAB, a rhyme scheme which focuses the reader's attention on the words, to stress the ideas themselves rather than any lyric or emotional effect. The first three stanzas present images based on the basic idea of love as a commodity which is quickly consumed as a selfish pleasure. The basic image used is love compared to a cup which one drinks out of and discards; in the first stanza lovers are "copas vacías," the word "vacías" establishing immediately the poem's pessimistic tone. The phrase "huyeron los días" introduces the time element and links with the other preterite verb "pusimos" to establish the feeling of love which has been lost. The desire for renewal of pleasure is expressed in the last line.

The next two stanzas expand the image to a description of a beloved as nothing more than a grouping of pleasure foods, to be enjoyed for gratification, nothing more:

Champán son las rubias de cutis de azalía;
Borgoña los labios de vivo carmín;

Las bocas de grana son húmedas fresas;
las negras pupilas escancian café . . . (p. 173)

The dehumanizing of love is made complete with this description; human love is reduced to self-gratification of a most base sort and thus stripped of any illusion of dignity. The last stanza comments on the feeling established by the image and completes the poem's imagery and emotion:

La copa se apura, la dicha se agota;
 de un sorbo tomamos mujer y licor . . .
 Dejemos las copas . . . Si queda una gota,
 que beba el lacayo las heces de amor! (p. 173)

The second and fourth lines complete the attitude established throughout the poem by summing up the images; woman and liquor are reduced to the same level, thus dehumanizing both lover and beloved. The closing phrase "las heces de amor" recapitulates perfectly the attitude expressed toward this most basic human need. This attitude may be summed up as a complete disillusionment with love, leading not to emotionalism or deep despair, but rather to a quiet resignation, rather defensive in its tone, as if the speaker must keep the emotion of love at a distance in order not to be too hurt by its failure. Disillusion and resignation are emotions basic to all of Nájera's poetry, yet these emotions are always projected beyond any immediate personal level to a universal, timeless level; the projection to universality is accomplished by discipline of language and emotion, maintaining the detached, somewhat impersonal tone seen in this poem.

A basic ingredient of the entire body of Nájera's poetry is its lyricism, a finely honed perception of lyric beauty which he is able to capture in concrete form through language, principally by means of a perfect blend of imagery and rhythm. The lyric effect thus produced is used in many poems to concretize and communicate a state of mind or subjective feeling; or it may be used simply for beauty's own sake.

The lyric masterpiece of Nájera's work, and one which includes both of these aspects or uses of lyricism, is "De blanco" (II, p. 167). This poem puts into form through language the sensations evoked by the color white. These are, in a rather standard poetic context, purity and a suggestion of an ideal reality removed from ordinary life. The search for the ideal is of course a basic theme of his poetry, and the poem is thus linked thematically to the body of his poetic work, as well as being linked technically by its use of lyricism. Thus the poem may be considered both technically and thematically a culmination of his poetic gift. However, quite apart from its thematic relation with the larger body of his work, the poem is his supreme lyric creation and is best considered from this point of view.

The physical quality of whiteness is the basis of the poem. This quality is suggested through vocabulary and imagery. The poem recreates, puts into concrete form this sensation or feeling; it then moves in a progression from description of the quality to imagery, culminating in the final image of a virgin bride as the incarnation of the qualities suggested by the color white. A series of variations on the basic quality is the result.

The opening stanza focuses on the color white itself, describing its qualities:

¿Qué cosa más blanca que candido lirio?
 ¿Qué cosa más pura que místico cirio?
 ¿Qué cosa más casta que tierno azahar?
 ¿Qué cosa más virgen que leve neblina?
 ¿Qué cosa más santa que el ara divina
 de gótico altar? (p. 167)

The rhythm of the poem is one of the most important aspects. It is a fluid rhythm moving unimpeded from line to line with a regular, strongly pronounced beat. The result is a feeling of exaltation, almost of intoxication with the beauty being described, an exaltation religious in intensity. The first stanza gains its effect through a series of questions linking adjectives with nouns, reproducing the effect of whiteness. The rhythm is arranged to stress the adjectives in series in the center of each line after the interrogative "¿Qué cosa . . . ," with the noun placed at the end of the lines. This arrangement, with rhythmic stress falling on the adjectives, emphasizes the qualities described: "blanca, pura, casta, virgen, santa." Thus the metrical arrangement of the stanza fuses perfectly with the vocabulary. Imagery also is employed, in each line an image completes the sensation or quality suggested by the adjective. The series of adjectives, nouns, and resulting images comes to rest on the image of the

altar, establishing the religious orientation of the poem. Religious purity is, at least, one aspect of the complex of emotions suggested.

With the second stanza the poem moves from description and verbal suggestion to pure imagery.

De blancas palomas el aire se puebla;
con túnica blanca, tejida de niebla,
se envuelve a lo lejos feudal torreón;
erguida en el huerto la trémula acacia
al soplo del viento sacude con gracia
su níveo pompón. (p. 167)

The scene is one of pure plastic beauty, reduced to the essence of color and relying solely on this for its effect. The scene is almost static, with only a suggestion of movement--"se puebla, soplo de viento"--to reduce the effect to purely visual terms. The static quality is also a component of the color white, imparting to it a sense of wholeness and calmness.

Groupings of color and movement combine in the third stanza to produce a rich visual texture:

No ves en el monte la nieve que albea?
La torre muy blanca domina la aldea,
las tiernas ovejas triscando se van;
de cisnes intactos el lago se llena;
columpia su copa la enhiesta azucena
y su ánfora inmensa levanta el volcán. (p. 167)

The mountain top, the tower, the sheep, the swans, the lily and the volcano peak are all groupings of white which stand out in high relief against their backgrounds, painting visual scenes in which white predominates and thus communicates its particular qualities quite distinctly. The white

objects are also all very solid, strong and durable--"monte, torre, volcán"--imparting a sense of strength to the color which it would otherwise not ordinarily have. The adjectives "intactos" and "enhiesta" also instill into the image a feeling of wholeness and unity which adds to the already established feeling of strength.

With the tone of the poem and the qualities associated with the color white thus established in these opening stanzas, the poem then begins to develop its final and dominant image, that of a virgin bride the morning of her wedding. This image, along with the reinforcing images of the church and the fields of flowers and a foaming brook, is developed in the final seven stanzas of the poem. The imagery employed is an extension of the images already used, continuing the tone of religious exaltation. The bride is idealized to the point almost of a deity. This may, of course, be read as an expression of Roman Catholic religious feeling, and in light of Nájera's earlier poems to the Virgin this is undoubtedly a part of the feeling evoked by the poem, but it is put into a much wider and more universal setting; the poem is an evocation of the purity suggested by the color white, of which a specifically religious feeling may or may not be a part. The poem is a lyric evocation of the ideal purity suggested by the color, and a religious connotation is hinted at but not made explicit.

The fourth and fifth stanzas describe the church, "Entremos al templo: la hostia fulgura" Visual impressions centering around the color white make up the image of the host as well as of the vestments, etc. The details of the church's appointments are described in greater detail which stresses the color and the quality of delicacy and fragility: "cristo de marmol," candles which are "sin mancha," and the "tenue cortina ligera" infused with sunlight. All of these images reinforce the dominant quality of purity which the poem has evoked.

After a description of the landscape stressing the vitality and invigorating freshness of it, the girl herself is described:

y el agua refresca sus hombros de diosa,
sus brazos eburneos, su cuello gentil. (p. 168)

These lines stress her purity indirectly through a description of physical appearance and the suggestion of cleansing in the fresh water. He addresses her as the embodiment of whiteness:

¡Oh mármol! ¡Oh nieves! ¡Oh Inmensa blancura
que esparces doquiera tu casta hermosura! . . .
de tu hábito blando nació la pureza,
del ángel das alas sudario al mortal. (pp. 168-169)

These lines expand on the quality of purity already instilled in the girl by making her the personification of superhuman purity; this image is not then one of earthly beauty but of celestial or god-like perfection. The image thus becomes an evocation of a quality rather than a description of a

person or thing. The success of the image lies in its personification of a quality, putting it into tangible form.

The closing stanza fuses the image of the church and the image of the god-like virgin:

En sueños ufanos de amores contemplo
 alzarse muy blancas las torres de un templo
 y oculto entre lirios abrirse un hogar;
 y el velo de novia prenderse a tu frente,
 cual nube de gasa que cae lentamente
 y viene en tus hombros su encaje a posar. (p. 169)

The dream or vision-like atmosphere which permeates the entire poem is stressed in this stanza, "sueños ufanos," but the adjective puts the stress on the joyous and positive emotion connected with it. The entire image is one which suggests a spiritual realm far removed from ordinary physical concerns. The final image of the veil completes both the image and the poem with a visual image which completes the quality which has been evoked throughout the poem. The veil is of course white, although this is not dwelt upon, the qualities of color having already been established and communicated. The stress here is on the unearthly delicacy and fragility of the veil and, by extension, of the entire range of sensations evoked in the poem, adding a final touch of gracefulness which raises the quality of purity even further above the ordinary impure world. The poem, by moving from suggestion and verbal description to a series of images (mountains, snow, white towers, swans) all communicating the qualities of white, to a development of

the final image of the church and the girl, has reproduced in verbal and visual form a complex human emotion: the desire to reach out to a higher purity, spiritual and unworldly.

These three poems together represent a revealing aspect of Nájera's poetic work. The common denominator of each is the objective distance maintained throughout from the emotions and feelings involved, the poet's ability to stand back, so to speak, from the emotions and art involved and maintain absolute control over them, both control of emotions and feelings and technical control. This detachment and conscious control are basic to the entire poetic work, basic components to the irony and lyricism which run through all the poetry, but which are more outstanding in these poems.

One may say that these poems represent the less personal side of Nájera's poetic personality. This aspect of the poetry complements and completes the deeply subjective exploration of emotional states of mind in the elegiac poems, or the spiritual crisis of such poems as "Monólogo del incrédulo" and "La duda." The deep emotionalism of these poems would result in mere histrionics were it not for Nájera's ability to universalize the emotion through technical control. The principal means of achieving this control is control of tone by means of varying the speaker of the poem and his attitude toward the poem's

subject. In the lighter satiric and lyric poems the speaker is far removed from the subject, not expressing deep personal states of mind as in the elegiac poems. Yet the world view of the poet of "La duquesa Job" is quite as penetrating as that of "Pax animae"; the difference lies in the manner of expression, principally in the attitude the speaker communicates, an attitude which is quite deeply felt in both cases. The seriousness in "La duquesa Job" is simply expressed in a less direct manner; the elegiac poems are more serious in manner, but not in intent.

Thus the poetic search, which motivates Nájera's poetry, lies as well at the heart of poems which may seem at first glance pleasant but inconsequential. The poetic search is the need to probe human experience to broaden and deepen consciousness in search of an elusive ideal. The lighter poems represent one facet of this search. Once the emotional need for the ideal has been explored and given expression and form, the intensely developed emotional sensitivity which remains allows the further exploration of the experience through satire and pure lyricism. These poems may be said to represent a plateau of psychic and technical maturity in which the emotional probings are contained and channeled into a more impersonal form.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

An evaluation of the work of Gutiérrez Nájera based on the study here presented would indicate that the poetry is a poetry of emotion; it does not present a systematic view of the world, nor is it a representation of any particular philosophy, religion, or school of thought. Rather, it is concerned with communicating a set of central emotions and states of mind by working them into form by means of words. The poetry, then, expresses emotions and particular states of mind put into communicable verbal form.

The basic theme, or central emotion, which is communicated, is a desire to reach out away from an imperfect world to find something higher, the "poetic search," in other words. Dissatisfaction with the world as it is, then, estrangement from it, and longing for something better are the key themes or emotions involved. Thus, in summary, the poetry may be said to be an expression of a state of mind conveyed in verbal form, revolving around the basic emotions of dissatisfaction, longing, loneliness, and melancholy.

Such deeply felt emotions would remain in an incomplete, formless, unintelligible state were the poet not possessed of the technical skill necessary to communicate them in aesthetic form through the medium of words. Nájera

does possess these skills; the basic technique is visual imagery which communicates the central state of mind by means of association of tangible phenomena with intangible feelings. This may be done by means of specific imagery conveying a certain aesthetic effect and, by extension, a deeper meaning, as in the series of images in "De blanco" which are constructed so that they build to the desired effect through a progression of visual effects; or it may be done more indirectly, by suggestion, as in the use of sunset to establish the mood of "Para entonces." The basic technique of visual imagery is enhanced by means of secondary techniques of tone, rhythm, and color.

Tone, defined as the central state of mind or emotion communicated by the poem, its essential emotional impact, is the central aspect of Nájera's most successful poetry; it is a matter of communicating an attitude, an interior state which concerns basic human emotions. It is accomplished in Nájera's poetry principally by means of first person speakers who reveal a certain attitude and mental state; these speakers are representations of an unidentified narrator-poet--attitudes rather than identifiable persons. A technique which complements this is word choice, control of exact use of vocabulary to convey emotions and the subjective attitudes revealed by the first person narrators of the poems in monologue form.

The use of rhythm is quite important to the poetry. The basic emotions upon which the poems depend for their effect are revealed partly through the aesthetic effect of the rhythm of the language employed, revealing both the quality of the emotion and the intensity of it. Thus, for example, the stately eleven syllable line of the elegiac poems conveying dignity and nobility, or the palpitating, nervous line conveying the quasi-religious exaltation of "De blanco."

The use of color is of course quite important to the total effect of many poems. This technique, taken in part from the French symbolists, equates a color with a certain human condition; for example, white represents purity, blue the poetic search for the ideal, and so on. The best analysis of Nájera's use of color has been done by Ivan Schulman; according to Schulman: "en esta técnica se establece un nexo entre lo anímico y lo visual."¹

Thus, by way of a generalized summary, one may say that the content of Nájera's poetry is a revealed, subjective state of mind (a restless "poetic search" after the ideal); the technique employed to communicate this puts the emotion into communicable verbal form by means of image, tone, rhythm, and color.

It is, of course, impossible to fix any body of literature with exact dates of development. Nevertheless, general, overall lines of development can often be discerned,

leading to a more complete understanding of the work as a complete whole. In Nájera's poetry, it is helpful to examine the work from two points of development, first the chronological development of the poems, as arranged in this study, and secondly the development of the technique. Thus a two part trajectory may be established, based upon the chronological development of the poetry and upon the technique, which involves essentially the control of the emotions involved and the control maintained in putting them into verbal form.

The chronological arrangement divides the poems into four basic periods leading from the earliest and least mature poems to the latest and most mature, from the standpoint both of philosophical development and technical control. The chronological divisions are: the early poems of 1875 to 1880; poems of conflict (1880 to 1887); the poems of crisis, (1886 to 1887); and the most mature poems, the elegiac poems of 1887 to 1893.

The early poems are religious in nature, although some love poems are included. In both types of poems we see the outlines of Nájera's basic theme of poetic search, expressed in the desire for religious or amatory fulfillment. Technically these poems are rough, although the basic techniques can be seen in a formative state. A verse which illustrates this is one from "María" (I, p. 47):

Mis ojos te contemplan, hermosa cual ninguna,
 subir hasta los cielos en busca de tu amor;
 y mírase a tus plantas la refulgente luna,
 y córcate la aurora con su rosado albor.

The basic technique is once again the first person speaker; here **he** communicates only rather trite emotion. The vocabulary is also trite; "refulgente luna" **attempts** to communicate a mood, but is not too successful. Rhythm communicates a feeling of religious excitement but is not well enough integrated into the whole to **be** successful. Color, in the "rosado albor," communicates feeling but is too vague and is not well developed.

The second period, poems of conflict, center around the emotion of conflict between the deeply felt faith of the early poems and a growing sense of doubt that the desired ideal is really to be found. These poems **show** more original use of the basic techniques, although still not always completely developed. The best poem of the period and **most** technically developed is "Mimí" in which mood, rhythm, imagery and color combine into a total effect. Less successful, and more representative of the period as a whole, is this segment from "Del libro azul":

Si mi secreto queréis que os diga,
 cerrad, si os place, vuestro balcón;
 temo que un silfo, mi buena amiga,
 en sus alitas llevar consiga
 átomos de oro de mi pasión. (I, p. 285)

This stanza succeeds almost as well as "Mimí"; the speaker communicates a definite mood, the rhythm is under good

control, the vocabulary and color more inventive than in the earlier poems.

The third grouping of poems, those of crisis, continues the basic conflict between faith and doubt in the search for the poetic ideal. Technically, these poems are uneven, with the mood created but not always controlled and sustained to best effect. "El hada verde," for example, creates the state of mind of emotional conflict and crisis, although without the dignity and resolution of the elegiac poems.

The last chronological division, the elegiac poems, represents the high point of Nájera's poetry, containing the resolution of the turmoil of the poetic search, and the highest development of the techniques common to the entire body of poetry. In poems like "Para entonces," absolute control over emotion, mood, imagery, rhythm and color suggestion unifies the poem into a near perfect whole.

Control, then, is the key word: control of emotion based on ability to contemplate in an objective, detached manner. The range of control is thus related to the degree of objectivity and detachment attained; technical maturity is thus related to the degree of control over the emotions being expressed, as well as control over the language itself. This total control is most carefully managed in such poems as "Mimí," the elegiac poems, the satiric poems, and the pure lyrics of "De blanco." For this reason these poems can be ranked as Nájera's masterpieces.

FOOTNOTES

PREFACE

¹Nell Walker, The Life and Works of Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Studies, 1927), Vol. 2. No. 2, p. 19.

²Carlos Gómez del Prado, Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera (México: Ediciones de Andrea, 1964), p. 18.

³Gómez del Prado, p. 24.

⁴For a detailed discussion of Nájera's use of color, see Ivan A. Schulman, Genesis del modernismo (Mexico, 1966). The essays in this book include articles published by Schulman on Nájera and other early modernista poets.

⁵Walker, p. 21.

⁶Boyd G. Carter, "Gutiérrez Nájera y Martí como iniciadores del modernismo," Revista Iberoamericana, No. 54 (1962),

⁷Ivan A. Schulman, "José Martí y Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera: Iniciadores del modernismo," Revista Iberoamericana, No. 57 (1964), pp. 9-50.

⁸Gómez del Prado, p. 24.

⁹Justo Sierra, Prologue to the first edition of Nájera's Poesías (Mexico, 1896). Reproduced in Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera, Poesías completas, ed. Francisco González Guerrero (Mexico: Porrúa, 1953), p. 17.

¹⁰González Guerrero, p. 19.

¹¹Rufino Blanco Fombona, El modernismo y los poetas modernistas (Madrid: Editorial Mundo Latino, 1929), p. 27.

¹²Ned Davison, The Concept of Modernism in Hispanic Criticism (Boulder, Colorado: Pruett, 1966), p. 4.

¹³Max Henríquez Ureña, Breve historia del modernismo (México: Fondo de cultura económica, 1962), p. 77.

¹⁴Walker, p. 4.

¹⁵Davison, p. 40.

¹⁶Boyd G. Carter, Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera, Estudio y escritos inéditos (México: Ediciones de Andrea, 1956), p. 31.

¹⁷Carter, p. 121.

¹⁸Carter, p. 33.

CHAPTER I

¹Gómez del Prado, p. 59.

²Antonio Acevedo Escobedo, Los cuatro poetas (México, 1944), p. 15.

³Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera, Poesías completas, ed. Francisco González Guerrero (México: Porrúa, 1953), I, 31. Subsequent references to the poetry will be noted in parentheses in the text. All references are to the González Guerrero edition.

⁴Acevedo Escobedo, p. 15.

⁵Acevedo Escobedo, p. 15.

⁶Ivan Schulman, "Función y sentido del color en la poesía de Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera," Revista hispánica moderna, I (1957), p. 3.

CHAPTER II

¹Carlos Gómez del Prado, in a perceptive comment on the thematic base of Nájera's poetry, says: "El elemento constante en la temática nájeriana, desde sus primeros poemas hasta los últimos de su vida, es el de la subjetividad." (Gómez del Prado, p. 59).

²Gómez del Prado, speaking of Nájera's expressive use of adjectives, says: " . . . el adjetivo sólo va ligado al sentimiento que el objeto descrito evoca en el poeta, y, al cabo, en el lector." (Gómez del Prado, p. 141).

³Gómez del Prado puts much less stress on Nájera's use of feminine figures, placing them on a much more literal level: "A pesar de que al pasar de los años la figura femenina en la poesía najeriana adquirirá más tonos, más matices, más redondeces de carácter y personalidad, básicamente, en lo más íntimo de su ser, conservará el poeta la visión de la mujer que ya se descubre en sus creaciones de juventud." (Gómez del Prado, p. 82). However, the idealized feminine figure is so constantly linked with the poetic search that she seems best linked with this basic poetic theme.

⁴Landscape is the basic means of setting mood in much of Nájera's poetry, as noted by Gómez del Prado: "En su poesía encontramos su estado anímico retratado en el paisaje que describe . . ." (Gómez del Prado, p. 136).

⁵"El amor que se ha ido, ya sea por causa de muerte o, sencillamente, del olvido, se presta perfectamente para evocar el apagado llanto que fuera tan característico de nuestro poeta." (Gómez del Prado, p. 85). The term "apagado llanto" captures quite precisely the feeling of this type of poetry.

⁶Gómez del Prado, p. 75.

⁷Gómez del Prado notes that in some Nájera poems the atmosphere " . . . evoca un ambiente reminisciente de Edgar Allan Poe."

⁸Gómez del Prado, p. 92.

⁹Gómez del Prado, p. 91.

CHAPTER III

¹Gómez del Prado, p. 98.

²Gómez del Prado again puts the major emphasis on the poem as an amorous poem, but it can best be read as one expression of the poetic search for the ideal. (See Gómez del Prado, p. 81).

³Gómez del Prado, p. 69.

¹Rufino Blanco Fombona, in El modernismo y los poetas modernistas, defines elegy as the communication of certain state of mind: "Ser elegista es, para nosotros, no cantar en tales o cuales metros, ni de tales o cuales asuntos, sino ante todo, sobre todo, poseer una manera de ser espiritual." (p. 73).

²Blanco Fombona, speaking of the elegiac mood of Nájera's poetry, says: "Posee aquella melancolía, aquel misticismo, aquella predisposición a sufrir penas de amor u otras penas, y aquella aptitud para cantarlas, que es en último análisis, como ya se insinuó, lo que caracteriza en nuestros días al elego o elegíaco." (p. 74).

³Gómez del Prado, speaking of Nájera's use of landscape imagery, says: "En su elaboración de la elegía anímica-- o íntima, si se prefiere-- con frecuencia se sirve Gutiérrez Nájera del paisaje-- nunca enteramente un paisaje verídico, sino más bien interno-- para describir en términos comprensibles la melancolía que le agobia." (Gómez del Prado, p. 87).

⁴Gómez del Prado, p. 62.

⁵Gómez del Prado seems to see the poem in a rather too orthodox Christian light: "El aspecto didáctico de la composición es harto evidente, donde se propone el poeta enseñarnos la lección cristiana del amor y del perdón." (Gómez del Prado, p. 96). The most mature poetry of Nájera transcends any strict religious interpretation and concerns itself with universal human experience.

⁶Nájera's best poems, as Max Henríquez Ureña points out, often concern interior struggle: " . . . esos cantos elegíacos . . . reflejan el drama interior de la duda que torturaba su espíritu." (Henríquez Ureña, p. 77).

CHAPTER VI

¹Schulman, "Función y sentido del color . . .", p. 10.

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